ROMANCE OF HISTORY.

INDIA.

THE

ROMANCE OF HISTORY.

India.

BY THE REV. HOBART CAUNTER, B. D.

"Truth is strange,
Stranger than fiction."
LORD BYRON

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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Heg. 721. The king was cut off by a conspiracy, and Mullik Khoosrow, the chief conspirator, raised to the throne; but he was put to death after a reign of only five months by Gheias-ood Deen Toghluk; and with his death terminated the second Tartar dynasty of the kings of Delhi. — 1321

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Heg. 724. The king, after having appointed his son, Aluf Chan, governor of Delhi, marched in person towards Bengal to stop the oppressions committed by the Rajahs of Luknowty and Soonargam. On his return towards his capital the king was met at Afghanpoor by his son and the nobles of his court, who ad- — 1323.

A. D. vanced to congratulate him upon his safe return. Here
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1325. Heg. 725. Aluf Chan ascended the throne by the title of Mahomed Toghluk. He was the most eloquent and accomplished prince of his time; and his letters, both in Arabic and Persian, display so much elegance, good taste, and good sense, that the most able secretaries of later times study them with admiration.

1327. Heg. 727. The king caused a copper coin to be struck, issued it at an imaginary value, and, by a royal decree, caused it to pass current throughout Hindostan. This was the cause of great distress, the bankers and merchants alone benefiting at the expense of the sovereign and his people.

1337. Heg. 738. Mahomed Toghluk conceived the idea of conquering China, and sent an army of one hundred thousand horse into Nepaul and the countries on either side of the Himalaya mountains. The expedition utterly failed, nearly the whole army having perished in those mountainous regions.

1340. Heg. 741. The king obtained possession of the strong fort of Kondhana, the modern Şingur, near Poma, which he starved into a surrender. He removed his family to Dowlutabad, which he resolved to make his capital, leaving the noble metropolis of Delhi a resort for bats and a dwelling-place for the beasts of the desert.

1341. Heg. 742. Mahomed Toghluk laid heavy contri-

butions upon Dowlutabad and the neighbouring provinces, which caused an insurrection; but his numerous and well-appointed army soon reduced the insurgents to their former state of slavery. This year the king nearly fell a victim to a pestilence which broke out in his camp with such violence that it swept off a great part of his army. Having lost one of his teeth, he ordered it to be buried with much ceremony at Beer, and caused a magnificent tomb to be raised over it, which still remains a monument of his vanity and folly. A. D. 1341.

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Heg. 744. The confederate Hindoos seized the country occupied by the Mahomedans in the Deccan and expelled them, so that within a few months Mahomed had no possessions in that quarter except Dowlutabad. 1344.

Heg. 747. The king promoted several persons in the meanest stations to the rank of nobles, which occasioned the hereditary Omrahs to revolt; but their leader Azeez, upon the king's troops advancing to attack him, becoming panic-stricken, fell from his horse, was made prisoner, and suffered a cruel death. His forces were totally routed. 1346.

Heg. 748. Dowlutabad fell into the hands of the insurgents, who put the king's officers to death and divided the public treasure. 1347

Heg. 752. Mahomed Toghluk, having eaten to excess of fish, was seized with fever of which he died, after a tyrannical reign of twenty-seven years, and was succeeded by his cousin Feroze Toghluk. 1351.

Heg. 755. The king built the city of Ferozabad, adjoining that of Delhi, and on the following year dug a canal forty-eight coss in length. He likewise constructed another canal between the hills of Mundvy 1354.

A D. 1354. and Surmore, from the Jumna, into which he conducted seven minor streams, which all uniting ran in one channel through Hansy, and from thence to Raiseen, where he built a strong fort, which he called Hissar Feroza.

1360. Heg. 762. The king sent the celebrated image of Nowshaba to Mecca, to be thrown upon the road, that it might be trodden under foot by the pilgrims.

1375. Heg. 776. The celebrated Mujahid Shah ascended the throne of the Deccan. In his fourteenth year, in a struggle with his father's spice-bearer, Moobarik, a man of great strength, he threw him and broke his neck.

1378. Heg. 779. He was assassinated after a reign of not quite three years. Hajy Mahomed Kandahary states that he received his death-wound from the son of Moobarik the spice-bearer.

1379. Heg. 781. Kurgoo, the Zemindar of Kutehr, invited to his house Syud Mahomed, governor of Budaoon, together with his two brothers, and basely murdered them. Enraged at this treachery, Feroze Toghluk instantly marched and took severe vengeance on the associates and kindred of the Zemindar, putting them to the sword, and levelling their houses with the ground. The murderer made his escape to the mountains of Camaoon, and was protected by the Rajahs of those parts. Feroze ordered a detachment of his army against them, and nearly twenty thousand of those mountaineers were made prisoners and condemned to slavery; but Kurgoo contrived to elude the vigilance of the king's general.

1388. Heg. 790. Feroze Toghluk died, after having reached the almost patriarchal age of ninety years.

The Mahomedan Nimrod.



The Mahomedan Nimrod.

CHAPTER I.

MUJAHID, the son of Mahomed Shah, sovereign of the Deccan, was remarkable for his courage and amazing strength of body. He was tall of stature, prodigiously muscular, yet, in dignity of demeanour and general majesty of aspect, surpassed all the princes of his race. In valour and fortitude he stood without a rival. Such was his strength of constitution, that he was affected by change neither of climate nor of atmosphere: whether the season were wet or dry, hot or cold, healthy or sickly, it was alike to him. He spoke the Toorky language fluently, which he acquired from his favourite companions, who were for the most part either Toorks or Persians. He was fond of archery from his infancy, and all his conversation tended to military subjects. His whole soul was absorbed by deeds of arms, or of hazard in

some shape. When a boy, he was the terror of his youthful associates. Whoever offended him was sure to feel the weight of his resentment, and such was his known determination, that they were afraid to unite against him, lest his single arm should prove sufficient to break their confederacy and punish them all; for he was repelled by no sense of danger from resenting injury. Still he was a beneficent youth, and beloved by them generally. There was nothing he would not do for them, so long as they did not wantonly thwart his projects, which were sometimes of a nature to be discouraged; but even when he engaged in any mischievous adventure, it was more from exuberance of animal spirits, and that love of enterprise which he could not suppress, than from depravity of heart.

One day calling his companions together, he proposed that they should go and hunt the tiger in some distant forest, where that animal was reported to abound. But a difficulty arose: many of them had no horses, and it was necessary that they should be supplied in order to accomplish the wishes of their young prince. What was to be done?

"We must go," said he, "at any rate, and you shallbe supplied with necessaries."

"But how," asked one, "are we to get them without money?"

"While there is a rupee in my father's treasury, as I live you shall not go without horses. We will hunt the tiger at all hazards."

None of his comrades could imagine how Mujahid intended to introduce himself into his father's treasury, which was protected by a strong door, secured by three huge bolts. These appeared much more than sufficient to baffle the efforts of a youth of fourteen, for that was precisely the age of Mujahid at this period. But he laughed at the idea of impediments to any enterprise dear to his heart; and, calling together the youths by whom he was generally attended, he desired they would accompany him to the treasury. It was guarded by a sentinel; but the prince, pretending to send him upon a message of some importance, promised to take his place until he should return.

No sooner had the soldier quitted his post, than Mujahid, rushing against the door which contained his father's treasure, shook it from the hinges, and opened a way to the means of procuring horses for his contemplated excursion. Taking several bags of gold, he divided the money among his youthful followers. They immediately repaired to a mart,

and supplied themselves with steeds, and other necessaries for the chase.

When the sentinel returned he found his post abandoned, and that he had been duped by the young prince. Knowing the penalty of having quitted his charge, he immediately left the spot and fled beyond the reach of danger. The treasurer, discovering the door broken down, and no sentinel on the spot, was amazed; but he had no difficulty in tracing the act to the king's son. The habits of Mujahid were too well known for suspicion to be diverted from him; and, when taxed by the treasurer with the theft, he did not deny it.

The sovereign, enraged at the vicious propensity of his son, sent his spice-bearer, Moobarik, to summon the prince before him. Upon entering his father's presence, perceiving by the king's manner that he had been made acquainted with the robbery of his treasury, Mujahid, when asked if he knew why he had been summoned, remained silent. "What could induce you," said the sovereign, "to commit such a trespass against the laws, and such an act of violence against the authority of your father? What do you deserve?"

Mujahid still continued silent, feeling justification impossible.

"Boy," said the father, sternly, "it is necessary that such a violation of the common laws of honesty as you have so wantonly committed should be punished with due severity, in order that my people may see I do not palliate or overlook the delinquencies of my son. What expectations can you hope to excite of your honour and justice when raised to this throne, of which you are the rightful heir, if you indulge thus in the vulgarest of all vulgar crimes? Such tendencies are unbecoming a prince, and must be subdued."

The king now ordered Mujahid to be stripped, and taking a whip, scourged him severely with his own hand until the shoulders of the youthful offender were covered with blood. The prince was then ordered to be imprisoned in the palace.

This galled him much more severely than the stripes he had received; they were only the infliction of a moment; but the restraints of imprisonment were vexatious to his haughty spirit. He was mortified, too, that his projected expedition had been frustrated, attributing his punishment to the officiousness of Moobarik, against whom from this time he harboured a deep and implacable enmity.

His mother visited him in his confinement, and

he complained to her with great bitterness of Moobarik.

"Nay, my son," said the queen, "the servant was not in fault; he only did his duty. He did not acquaint your father with your act of youthful indiscretion, it was the treasurer."

"But if the spice-bearer had informed me that the affair at the treasury had been discovered, I could have evaded my father's wrath, made you my intercessor, and thus have escaped the visitation of his anger."

"That will subside," my son. "I can still be your intercessor."

"But the punishment has been inflicted,—my back still bears the marks of stripes; and, though these may be effaced from my skin, they will never be obliterated from my memory. Those are wrongs, mother, which can neither be forgotten nor forgiven."

"Would you harbour a spirit of revenge against your father?"

"No; but against the man who has caused that father to visit me with bodily chastisement my hatred will be unextinguishable."

"Nay, this is the working of unsubdued passion, — the feeling will abate. Your cool judgment may

convince you that Moobarik has not been in fault, and you will be pacified."

Mujahid made no reply; but the lowering of his brow sufficiently indicated the deep-settled hostility that had already stirred the slumbering passions of his soul,—the fiercest and least tractable.

At the mother's intercession, after a week's confinement, the prince was set at liberty; and, at her especial request, he forbore to exhibit any marks of enmity against the spice-bearer; but he wore a mask upon his countenance that disguised the rage working at his heart. He summoned his youthful playfellows around him, and seemed occupied by the amusements common to his age; but, with the eye of a lynx, he only watched for an opportunity to signalize his revenge upon the man who had aroused his hatred. This he sought to accomplish without involving himself in an act of legal criminality. The son of Moobarik was one of his comrades, and to him he showed marks of unusual attention, in order to blind him to the one dark purpose with which his own young heart was teeming.

It happened that a discussion took place one day among the boys with whom the prince associated, upon the respective merits of different wrestlers who had distinguished themselves in the

arena upon occasions when public sports had been exhibited before the king. In the course of the conversation the son of Moobarik mentioned his father to be so strong and skilful in the manly exercise of wrestling, that he had several times thrown some celebrated players.

"Ay," said Mujahid; "I should like to have a trial of skill with that sturdy father of yours. Do you think he would fear to encounter the strength of a boy of fourteen?"

"Nay," said Musaood Chan, with a good-natured laugh, "the king's spice-bearer could have no objection, I should fancy, in proving his strength to the king's son."

"It will be an unequal game—youth against manhood; yet I think I could make the spice-bearer turn his eyes to the sun without measuring my own length beside him."

This freak of the prince excited the merriment of his juvenile friends; they expected to see their daring companion somewhat roughly handled in the grasp of Moobarik, who was generally reported a person of great strength, having been raised by the sovereign to his present dignity on account of his feats in arms.

Mujahid threw himself in the spice-bearer's way,

and after offering a courteous greeting, said, with a jocular air,

"Your son tells me you have so sinewy an arm that few champions in the wrestling-ground would be able to stand against you, if you were to condescend to encounter them in a trial of strength and skill."

"My son says indeed true. I have on more than one occasion thrown the strongest men in the king's army, and my arm has yet lost none of its vigour."

"Are you willing to put it to the test?"

"I can find no worthy rival among my equals, and I should scarcely degrade my nobility by entering the arena against the hirelings of the king's pleasures."

"You need not fear to find a competitor of your own rank; for I am willing to try my powers and skill against yours, if you do not doubt your chances of victory."

"I can have no objection to a friendly contest with my master's son; but he must not be vexed if he should happen to be somewhat roughly handled, for wrestling is no lady's game."

"I am prepared for what may ensue. Though but a boy, you must remember that I broke open

the door of my father's treasury; you will not, therefore, have a mere boy's strength to try."

On the following day it was agreed that the prince and the spice-bearer should wrestle before the king. The preliminaries were settled, the spectators assembled, and the competitors entered the hall of the palace, which was strewed with sand in order to break the force of their falls. Both the champions appeared naked to the waist. The tall, muscular frame of Moobarik contrasted singularly with the round smooth limbs of his youthful adversary, who was exceedingly robust, and the size of his sinews hidden under a round surface of healthy flesh. At the first onset, Moobarik grasped his antagonist by the shoulders, raised him in the air, and was about to cast him on the floor, when the prince adroitly passed his leg behind the spice-bearer's knee, and threw him on his back in an instant, falling upon him with considerable force. The spectators were astonished; but there being a dispute as to the fairness of the fall, both parties consented to another struggle. This was not much longer than the last. After a little shifting to make good his intended grasp, Mujahid seized his opponent suddenly by the waistband of his short trou-

sers, and, raising him in his arms, flung him on the ground with such force that he lay senseless. He had pitched upon his head; and, upon examination, it was found that his neck was broken.

CHAPTER II.

The death of Moobarik afforded a subject of conversation for several weeks at the court of Mujahid's father. It was matter of extreme surprise that a mere boy should have so easily foiled a man of such great strength, and have so rapidly and fatally concluded the contest. He was from this time looked upon as a prodigy. Musaood Chan, however, from that moment entertained an implacable hatred against the destroyer of his father. He dared not openly manifest his hostility; nevertheless, it burned within him with a smothered, indeed, but still with an unextinguishable, flame. He heard the general applause bestowed upon the courage and prowess of the prince with silent yet fierce repugnance, which he was obliged to mask under the exterior of a suavity that seemed like self-mockery.

Mujahid treated him with kindness and with confidence; and being of an open unsuspicious temper, he did not for a moment harbour a thought

of Musaood's sinister feelings towards him; as the former neither expressed anger, nor evinced the slightest symptom of resentment at his father's death.

As Mujahid advanced towards manhood, he became the terror of the neighbouring potentates. He commanded his father's armies, and invariably led them to conquest. The son of Moobarik witnessed his success with envy, and the fires of vengeance still smouldered in his bosom. He had a beautiful sister, whose detestation of the prince was no less ardent than his own; she could not wipe from her memory the cause of her father's death; but she, as well as her brother, dissembled her resentment, and received Mujahid courteously when they happened to meet.

The prince had conceived a passion for her, which he shortly avowed, and she encouraged. Hoping that it would forward the opportunity of revenge so ardently desired by her brother and herself, she pretended a reciprocal attachment, and listened to his unholy declarations of love, at first without any expressions of shame, and, finally, with apparent pleasure. His passions were roused; but under various pretences, the artful siren de-

layed gratifying those passions which her seeming acquiescence had provoked.

Musaood was pleased at seeing his intended victim gradually drawing towards the toil which he was preparing for him. The prince never for a moment imagined that the children of Moobarik attached to him the guilt of having purposely destroyed their father. Taking it for granted that they looked upon his death as a mere accident, he did not conceive that there could be cause for the slightest hostility towards him, and the daughter's apparent affection confirmed this impression. His love for the sister caused him to repose the greatest confidence in the brother. The latter became privy to all the prince's designs; encouraging Mujahid's favourable feelings towards him by affecting a fervent zeal for his welfare.

Mujahid's love for the wily daughter of his father's late spice-bearer at length knew no bounds, and she was obliged to adopt all the resources of her woman's art to keep him from proceeding to extremities. She tantalized him with promises, which she evaded fulfilling by the most ingenious artifices. It was found at length necessary to withdraw him for a while from the object of his

passion, in order to rescue her from a dilemma which was daily becoming more difficult to elude.

Musaood, therefore, proposed a few days' excursion into the woods to enjoy the pleasures of the chase, of which he knew the prince to be so fond, that even his love of woman yielded to his love of killing lions and tigers. It might, too, chance that in the forest an opportunity would arise so long and so ardently sought. The prince accordingly repaired to the jungles, accompanied by his young friends, and for several days with his single arm destroyed many of its fiercest inhabitants.

One morning he was informed that an enormous elephant was in the neighbourhood. The huge beast was said to have committed dreadful ravages, and to have killed so great a number of people who had ventured near its place of usual resort, that travellers had discontinued passing by that road for fear of encountering the savage animal. Nothing could be more gratifying to Mujahid than the idea of encountering an enemy which every one else shunned; and without loss of time he proceeded to the spot where the elephant was reported to have taken up its abode. It turned out to be a solitary male which had been expelled from the

herd; and when this happens, it always renders these animals extremely savage.

Mujahid found the colossal beast in a part of the wood where the growth was more than usually scanty, tearing down with eager voracity the tender branches of the young trees which were growing around him. At the sight of intruders, it stopped, raised its trunk, gave a shrill cry, and approached them at a rapid pace. The prince deliberately placed an arrow on the string of his bow, pulled it to the head, and sent it on its way with the force of a shot from an arquebuse. The steel head struck the elephant on the breast, and the whole shaft was buried in the animal's body; the very feather being dyed with its blood. The gigantic creature dropped instantly dead.

All were amazed at the force with which the arrow had been sped. Mujahid ordered the elephant to be opened, that he might see the direction which his arrow had taken. This was accordingly done, and it was found that the shaft had passed directly through the animal's heart. The murmurs of astonishment rose into a great burst of acclamation; but in proportion to the triumph of the king's son the envy of Musaood increased.

Among the persons present upon the occasion was a Tartar. This man was deeply in love with the late spice-bearer's daughter, who returned his affection; he therefore felt that hatred towards the king's son which ardent lovers generally entertain towards their rivals. The hot blood of this Tartar was roused at the thought of the object of his pure and fervent attachment being pursued with sentiments of unholy love; and he was prepared to execute any desperate act by which he might rid the world of a wicked prince, and himself of a dangerous rival. Musaood was well aware of his feelings, and likewise of the reckless fierceness of his character; and, thinking that now was a favourable time to attack the prince's life when he was reposing in full security upon the fidelity of his friends, he persuaded Tuglook Beg to attempt the assassination of Mujahid during the chase on the day after the latter had destroyed the elephant.

During the morning the sport had been great; and Mujahid, stopping upon the bank of a small rivulet, quitted his horse in order to bathe his temples in the cool refreshing waters. He gave the reins into the hands of an Afghan, named Mahmood, who held them while his master alighted.

At this moment the Tartar approached unperceived through the hollows and broken ground along the banks of the stream, and was in the act of charging the prince at full speed. The cry of some of his attendants exciting Mujahid's attention, he raised his head, and observed Tuglook Beg advancing towards him at a gallop, evidently with the design of cutting him down, his sword being bared and raised as in the act to strike. The prince immediately seized the reins of his horse, and making a sign to Mahmood Afghan to interpose himself betwixt his master and the assassin, sprang into his saddle. The faithful armour-bearer advanced to meet Tuglook Beg; but his steed rearing, owing to the inequality of the ground, it fell, and gave the adversary a momentary advantage. It was a critical moment; the Tartar came on with the speed of a whirlwind; but Mujahid, being now prepared to encounter him upon equal terms, spurred his horse forward. Tuglook Beg, however, made a stroke at the prince, before the latter had time to put himself fully upon his guard: the blow fell upon his turban, which, being folded very thick and hard, in order to protect his head from the ardent rays of the sun, the sword did not penetrate, though it

struck the turban from his brow, and left it exposed to the chance of a more successful blow. Mujahid, however, having recovered his position, rose in his saddle, and bringing his heavy cimeter upon the Tartar's shoulder, clove him to the chine, and he instantly fell dead from his horse. Having replaced the faithful Mahmood Afghan upon his charger, the prince joined his friends amid shouts and acclamations, in which Musaood Chan was the foremost to join.

The fate of Tuglook Beg only embittered the hatred of his friend towards his destroyer, and strengthened his determination of vengeance. His sister received the news of her lover's fate with that tearless grief which bespeaks intense suffering, or the counteraction of a purpose stronger than the sorrow, to which it becomes subservient.

Fortunately at this time the prince was called to oppose Krishin Ray, Rajah of Bejanuggur, who laid claim to some forts belonging to Mujahid's father, which saved the object of his passion from coming to an open rupture with him, ere she and her brother found means to revenge their parent's death by accomplishing the destruction of him who had been the cause of it.

As the prince advanced, Krishin Ray retreated before him. Afraid to meet so formidable a foe in the field, but hoping to cut him off by stratagem, the Rajah fled from place to place, and was pursued by Mujahid for weeks without coming to an engagement. At length the good-fortune of the latter prevailed. The health of Krishin Ray and his family became affected by the pestilential air of the woods, and they were warned by their physicians to quit them. But the Rajah, hoping that his enemy, unaccustomed to the deleterious atmosphere, would fall an easy prey, resolved to continue where he was, until he saw his expectations realized upon the foe. Mujahid's constitution, however, was proof against the pestilential air by which his enemy thought he would be destroyed; and Krishin Ray was himself the first to suffer; several of his family died, and he became himself so ill, that he was obliged to retreat by secret paths towards Bejanuggur. Mujahid dispatched an army in pursuit of him, while he laid waste the country. Having broken down many temples of the idolaters, and destroyed numerous idols, he returned flushed with victory to his father's capital.

It now appeared to Musaood and his sister that their hated enemy was destined to triumph in all

his undertakings, and that they were doomed to suffer the utmost severity of disappointment. It was nevertheless their policy still to dissemble; and the artful siren received her detested lover with gracious smiles of welcome, that were like oil poured upon the flame of his passions, which hitherto had been only tantalized, and now raged with redoubled fury.

CHAPTER III.

In order to avoid the importunities of Mujahid, the sister of Musaood was obliged to feign illness, that she might not give him umbrage by opposition. The chase was again her brother's resource to withdraw his royal friend's thoughts from the indulgence of more criminal passions.

In a mountain some few miles from the capital was a cave, reported to be the haunt of wild beasts. This information had been privately conveyed to Musaood, and he determined to take advantage of the prince's ignorance of this fact to accomplish the long-cherished purpose of his soul. Mujahid made no objection to another expedition into the forests in search of the lion and tiger, since that was a pastime perfectly congenial with his adventurous spirit. With him excitement was a vital principle. The announcement of peril was music to his ear. He was accompanied by his favourite Mahmood Afghan, who always attended him in his excursions, whether of war or of pleasure.

He went as usual armed with his bow, a well-filled quiver, and his cimeter, which had been tried in many a rough encounter with foes, in whose blood it had been frequently steeped.

Musaood had lost nothing of the prince's confidence: so admirably did he mask his feelings, that not a creature save his sister knew, and no one suspected, his deadly hostility to the son of Mahomed Shah. Nothing could exceed his apparent zeal in seeking to administer to the enjoyments of the prince, who was a perfect slave to his pleasures; and Mujahid acknowledged the professed fidelity of the late spice-bearer's son with especial marks of favour.

Upon approaching the forest where the pleasures of the chase were to be enjoyed, the skies began to lower, and to threaten one of those violent elemental conflicts occasionally witnessed within the tropics, and of which even the Alpine storms in Europe can afford but a faint conception. It soon became too evident that a hurricane was to be expected, and the only thing which now occupied the thoughts of the party was where they should find shelter.

The prince was at this time separated from his followers, being accompanied only by Mah-

mood, Musaood, and a menial attendant. This had been purposely contrived by his foe, to whom, however, not the slightest suspicion of any sinister design attached.

The sun soon became veiled by a succession of coppery clouds which rapidly overspread the sky, opening at intervals in different places, and emitting momentary flashes of lightning. The rain quickly began to fall upon the broad smooth leaves of the trees; the birds flew to the foliage, and chirped dolefully. Snakes and lizards crawled from beneath the bushes, where they had been basking in the genial sunshine, and crept into the tufts of high grass with which the jungle abounded. A gloom passed over the earth, like the sudden setting in of night, and the distant howlings of the forest community gave a strong feature of dreariness to the scene.

The storm was every moment increasing, and the party were by this time anxious to obtain a shelter. They had advanced considerably up the hill. Musaood had taken care to be informed of the exact locality of the cavern to which he led the way, the prince and his companions following. The ascent was rather steep, and, from there being no regular pathway, not easy to climb. Their

anxiety to escape from the pelting of the storm enabled them to overcome all impediments.

They had fastened their horses under trees in a small glen at the hill's base, as the ascent was too steep to render the attempt on horseback practicable. After about a quarter of an hour's toil they reached a natural recess in the mountain, within which was the entrance to a cave, no doubt the same that had been described to Musaood. The opening was low, and so narrow that not more than one person could squeeze in at a time. It was about four feet high, and scarcely more than two wide. Within, the darkness was so intense, that the eye could not penetrate to the extremity. Scarcely was the party safely sheltered, when the hurricane poured down with prodigious fury. The rain fell in a confluent stream, forming little cataracts, which gushed over the slope of the hill between the rocks, adding to the rush and roar of the tempest. The entire horizon appeared every moment illumined, and the lightning streamed like a fiery deluge upon the earth. There was the least imaginable pause between the flashes. A large tree in front of the cavern was struck, the trunk severed from the root, as if cleft with an axe by an omnipotent arm, and it fell with

an awful crash down the side of the mountain. The thunder rolled with scarcely an interval between the peals, and occasionally burst with such deafening crashes, that the ear could not endure the sound without a positive sensation of pain. Snakes and other reptiles were washed from their coverts, and crawled for shelter into the cavern, as if awed by the fierce convulsion of the elements. They exhibited no signs of reluctance at the propinquity of human beings, of whom they have an instinctive fear, but appeared as if they had laid aside their natural instincts under the terrors by which they were assailed. The savage cobra closed its hood and slunk into a corner of the cavern, as if glad to hide itself from the terrors of the storm. After a while, the lightning flashed less continuously; there were longer intervals between the peals of thunder; it became gradually more remote, and at length the sun glimmered through the clouds, which, rapidly dissipating before its beams, left a beautiful expanse of clear blue sky above the hill.

The gloom of the cavern had now considerably abated, though nothing was distinctly perceptible at the extremity.

As soon as the deafening noise of the tempest

had subsided, a singular sound was heard at the end of the cave, like the loud purring of a cat. Mahmood and the attendant groping their way towards it, shortly returned with something in their arms, which, when exposed to the light, proved to be the cubs of a lioness. The ferocious parents were evidently abroad, but this discovery was not at all calculated to beget an assurance of safety.

"We had better," said the attendant, "immediately quit our retreat, or we shall be visited by the parents of these young savages before we have time to escape. They will no doubt return now the storm has abated, and we may look for their presence every moment."

"Well!" said the prince, "you don't fear to encounter a lion? This will be somewhat reversing the sport; instead of seeking the game, it will seek us: but, upon second thoughts, it will not do to let them come upon us before we are prepared; we shall be cramped in this cave; we must have room to ply our arms. If the lions make good their entrance before we have secured our retreat, we shall stand but a sorry chance for our lives."

"Suppose," said Musaood, "I go and climb yonder tree, which commands a view of the entire

side of the hill. Should anything approach I can give you a signal; you will have plenty of time to mount the rock just beyond where we now stand, and from that elevation, with the prince's unerring aim, the lions will prove but contemptible foes."

"Nay," said Mahmood Afghan, "I like not this mode of getting hedged by dangers; let us quit the cavern at once, and encounter our enemies in an open field, if they come upon us. I need not tell you that these animals are always the more furious when disturbed near the lair in which they have deposited their cubs."

"That's just what I should desire," said Mujahid: "the more furious the quarry, the greater the sport. You say, however, well, Mahmood; let us go and meet these tawny strangers."

During the raging of the tempest, the prince and Mahmood had flung down their bows and quivers upon the floor of the cave: when the attendant took them up in obedience to the command of his master, it was found that the cubs had been amusing themselves with the arrows, and had snapt every reed except two. This was a mortifying discovery. It was now held advisable that the party should not seek an encounter with the

lions, as they were no longer in a condition to face them, but make the best of their way down the hill, obtain a fresh supply of arrows, and return on the following day.

By this time Mussood had quitted the cavern, and climbed a lofty tree not far off, as he had proposed. The prince, with his armour-bearer Mahmood, and the menial attendant, were about to quit their place of refuge, when a huge lion appeared advancing stealthily towards its den, which they had occupied in its absence.

"Hah!" said Mujahid, "we have no chance now, I see, but to struggle at a disadvantage: the foe has taken us by surprise, and we must use the best means of defence which such an emergency has left us. He shall have a warning, however, that we are not to be intruded upon with impunity."

The prince placed an arrow on the string of his bow, and discharged it as the lion advanced. It struck him in the shoulder, the steel head fixing in the bone. The wounded beast gave a savage howl, tore the shaft from its body, and bounded forward with a roar that made the mountains ring.

Meanwhile the party had rolled a huge fragment of rock, which lay within the cave, be-

fore the entrance, and thus excluded the ferocious visitor. Reaching the opening, the lion paused a moment, repeated its roar, and sprang against the stone. This vibrated with the animal's weight. It repeated its spring; but the prince placing his back against the piece of rock, managed by his immense strength to prevent the lion from forcing an entrance. The savage creature put its paws upon the stone, and thrust its nose into the aperture left between the top of the fragment and that of the entrance. Sensible that enemies had invaded the sanctuary of its home, its howls were terrific, its eyes glared with portentous rage, and it repeatedly rushed against the opposing barrier, in order to force a passage to its offspring. All its attempts, however, were foiled.

"Mahmood," said the prince, as the enraged beast was standing with its paws upon the stone, licking its rapacious jaws, now covered with foam, "take thy bow, and discharge the arrow which remains into the lion's eye. You are so close that you may make sure of your aim; and if well taken the steel will enter its brain, and give us a safe delivery."

Mahmood took the bow; his hand trembled with anxiety, not with fear. He was visible to the lion;

which glared upon him with an expression of terrific fury. Its eye was open to the utmost extension. Mahmood placed the barb of his arrow within a few inches from the rolling orb, and hurriedly drew the string. At the instant it escaped from his finger, the lion raised its head, and received the shaft through its tongue. Maddened by the pain, it bounded a moment from the opposing rock and rolled upon its back, snapping the reed with its teeth, and returning with renewed fury to its former position. The foam now dropping from its mouth was dyed with blood. It protruded the lacerated tongue, from which the gore copiously dripped, part of the reed still sticking in the wound.

CHAPTER IV.

THE situation of the prince, his friend, and attendant, was becoming every moment more critical. The lion seemed determined to remain stationary at the entrance of the cave, and to admit it was certain death. Mujahid, however, resolved to remove the stone from the cavern's mouth and take the chance of a conflict with the ferocious beast. He and Mahmood had their swords; one of them therefore might escape, though, from the darkness and lowness of their place of refuge, the chances were doubtful.

Musaood had at first secured his safety in the tree, from which he descended while the foe was eagerly engaged with those who had so unwittingly intruded into its den, and succeeded in making his escape. Having reached the bottom of the hill, he mounted his horse and galloped off in search of the prince's followers, hoping that the slayer of his father would now meet with deserved retribution.

As Mujahid was about to remove the fragment of rock from the cave's mouth, Mahmood proposed that they should try to strangle the lion with a strong silken cord with which he had come provided; a sort of lasso, which he was very skilful in throwing, and with which he was in the habit of securing smaller game.

"No," said the prince, "that were an ignoble and cowardly mode of destroying the regal beast; I have a kindred feeling which repels me from such a dog-like method of killing a lion. Besides, the thing is impracticable, you will never be able to get it over the creature's head."

"I will try however," said Mahmood, "since I have no kindred feeling about the matter, and would as soon strangle a lion as a cat."

Mujahid, in spite of his prejudices against casting a stigma upon regality by attempting to inflict a degrading death upon the "monarch of the woods," yielded at length to the expostulations of his armour-bearer, who attempted to cast the noose of the lasso over the lion's head. The aperture above the stone was so small that he had not room to fix it; and while he was making the attempt, with a fearful growl the enraged animal seized the rope between its teeth, sprang from the opening, drew it

from Mahmood's grasp, and left him without a resource in his peril.

"Well," said the prince, "there is now no alternative between trying which will be the longest starving, ourselves or our brindled guard, or allowing it to enter and boldly trying our strength against it. We are three to one, and that is fearful odds."

"But the darkness and disadvantage of this low cave reduces our chances and increases those of the enemy."

"We must then bring him to battle on the outside of his den."

"Alas! before we can squeeze ourselves through this narrow entrance, the savage will have made good its spring, and the first stroke of its paw is certain death."

The attendant now proposed as a last resource that they should strangle the cubs and throw them out to the lion. This was indeed a desperate experiment, but Mujahid consented that it should be tried. The attendant accordingly unwound the turban from his forehead and twisted it tightly in the form of a rope. The cubs were found asleep in a corner of the cave; but though so young, their strength was such as to render the process of strangulation a thing of some difficulty. A noose was made in the centre of the twisted turban, and being

passed over the cub's head, was pulled at either end by Mahmood Afghan, and the attendant, the prince meanwhile applying his vast strength to keep the lion from displacing the stone from the entrance.

Both the cubs being at length strangled, were forced through the aperture, and flung before the enraged parent. The moment it saw its offspring, the lion quitted the stone, stood over the cubs, and began to purr, licking their heads for a few moments with the greatest tenderness. After a while, seeing they did not move, it turned them over gently with its paw, erected its ears, and looked at them intently for an instant; then, as of a sudden becoming conscious that they were dead, erected its head, raised its nose in the air, and howled with a piteous expression of agony. The wounded tongue hung over its jaws, still suffused with gore, and tears filled the eyes of the noble beast as it again bent down its head to gaze upon the work of destruction.

Its emotion soon subsided, and was succeeded by the most frightful rage. It dashed against the barrier with increasing fury, and its roarings were continued without intermission. It now required the whole strength of the prince and his two companions to keep the stone from giving way under the furious

assaults of the lion. After a while, as if exhausted with its energies, it retreated a few feet from the aperture, lay down upon its belly beside the dead cubs, raised its head towards the skies, as if invoking a silent curse upon the destroyers of its offspring, and sent its voice among the surrounding echoes, which multiplied it into one fearful and prolonged evocation of blended fury and distress. In a short time it started to its feet, waved its tail, and looking forward, ceased its horrible roar. Upon turning his eyes toward the spot, the prince perceived another lion advancing at a rapid trot in the direction of the cavern.

"This," cried Mahmood, "is no doubt the mother of the cubs, and we have, if possible, more to dread from her fury than from that of the male savage. We have now no chance of our lives but by continuing where we are until the lions shall retire. They will, probably, drag the cubs away after the first burst of grief for the loss of their young shall have subsided."

"I like not this imprisonment," said the prince, "and shall only forbear forcing a retreat a short time longer. I am determined to try my chance of escape while my strength remains unabated."

Mahmood, however, prevailed upon his impatient

and daring master to await the issue of the second beast's approach, before he rashly determined upon an encounter, which it was now apprehended must infallibly terminate in the death of each of them.

The lioness advanced eagerly, with her ears erected; and having reached her cubs, she turned them over for a moment with her paw, and instantly perceiving they were dead, rushed towards a tree that grew near, sprang upon the trunk, and stripping off the bark, began to tear it in pieces with the greatest violence. She now united her roars with those of her consort; then fixing her eyes upon the den in which she had deposited her young, bounded with foaming jaws towards the opening. Infuriated by opposition, she darted to and fro before the cave, springing at the trees, fixing her claws in the bark, and stripping their trunks bare to the root. Again she assaulted the stone which prevented entrance into her lair.

While she was exhibiting these paroxysms of exasperation, the male, probably exhausted by its previous exertions, lay down beside the cubs, placed its two fore paws upon their bodies, and resting its head upon the ground between them, kept up a low and continuous moan. The lioness, at length fatigued with her unavailing efforts to retaliate

upon the destroyers of her young, walked deliberately up to the lion, and after again turning over the bodies of her cubs, she seized one of them in her mouth, and plunged with it into the thicket: the lion took up the body of the other in the same way, and immediately followed her. After a while the party in the cavern heard their roarings in the distance, and began now to think seriously of making good their retreat.

"Our danger," said the attendant, "is by no means at an end. Those animals are never-failing in their instincts; they know that the destroyers of their offspring are in this cave, and they will not quit the neighbourhood until they have had their revenge. Their vigilance is not to be evaded."

"But," said Mahmood, "did you not hear their roarings in the distance?"

"Nevertheless they will return immediately upon their steps. I have seen much of the habits of these ferocious creatures. They have disposed of the bodies of their dead cubs under some shrub or tuft of grass, and covered them with dried leaves; they are now on the watch for us; it is utterly impossible we should escape."

"They shall feel the sharpness of this sword's point, however, if they do come upon us," said the

prince, rising, and stretching his cramped limbs. "Our chance will be greater beneath the fair light of the sky, with plenty of fighting-room, than cooped up in this dismal den, where we can't distinguish a lion from a shadow."

"It is clear," said Mahmood, "there is no safety for us here; we have, consequently, only a choice of evils, and it will therefore be the greater prudence to choose the least. The lions are now out of sight, and in spite of their cunning, we may be fortunate enough to baffle it."

"Then we had better descend the mountain," said the attendant, "in the opposite direction to that taken by our watchful enemies, else we must give up every chance of evading them."

"But there is no practicable path," said the prince; "and even if there were, our chances are much the same, whatever road we take, provided what thou sayest of the vigilance of these creatures be true."

The stone was now rolled from the cave's mouth, and the prince pushed his body through the narrow opening, followed by his armour-bearer and the attendant. No enemies were visible, and their roarings had by this time ceased to echo among the hills. Approaching the tree into which

Musaood had climbed upon the first apprehension of danger, Mujahid looked up, and called upon his friend to descend; but perceiving that he was not among the branches, the prince said with a smile,

"Musaood has tried the speed of his heels. If the lions should have crossed his path and wreaked their vengeance upon him, they will probably be satisfied: but if he has escaped, there is at least an equal chance for us. Grasp your swords and follow me."

"I have no doubt," said Mahmood, "he has made good his retreat; I saw him descend the tree while the first lion was engaged in assaulting the rocky fragment which we had laid across the entrance of the cavern. He's a wary youth that Musaood: I know of no one who likes so little to get into danger, or who knows so well how to extricate himself out of it."

"That is not the lion's instinct," said the prince, smiling.

"Nay, but it is part of the wise man's discretion."

"Then, Mahmood, thy master is a fool; for he never was yet remarkable for his prudence in getting out of a scrape."

"But valour," replied Mahmood, with a respect-

ful salaam, "is not an attribute of wisdom; that, therefore, would be prudent in the brave man, which would be folly in the wise."

"Then we bold fools, Mahmood, may be justified in cutting the throats of lions for the preservation of our own lives; while your sages, in conformity with their characters of wise men, would, as a matter of course, bow their heads under the lion's paw, and die like philosophers."

Mahmood smiled, made another salaam, and remained silent, as if assenting to the truth of his master's observation.

The party proceeded slowly onward, on account of the narrowness and ruggedness of the path, which would not admit of two going abreast. In a short time, however, they had overcome the most difficult part of the descent without interruption from their dreaded foes. They were already congratulating themselves with having escaped, when a cry from the attendant, who was a few yards behind his master and Mahmood, caused the two latter to stop and turn. The cause of that cry of alarm was soon explained. The two lions were seen making their way down the side of the mountain at a very rapid rate, their ears depressed, the hair on their tails erected, and exhibiting other signs of fury not to be mistaken.

It was impossible to avoid them as the path was still narrow and rugged.

The prince, drawing his cimeter, placed himself in front of his two companions, and undauntedly awaited the threatened onset. The male lion was several paces in advance of the lioness, and, bounding forward, stopped suddenly within about thirty feet of its intended victim, and crouching a moment crawled a few yards upon its belly, then rising with a quick motion sprang with the rapidity of lightning towards Mujahid. He had been prepared for this; and when he saw the body of the angry beast propelled towards him, as if urged by that Almighty force which wings the thunderbolt, he leaped actively on one side, raised his weapon, and urging it with all his force as the foe descended, struck it in the mouth with the full impulse of an arm that, by a similar stroke, had frequently severed the head of a buffalo. The sword crashed through the jaws, forced its way into the throat, opening so hideous a wound that the lion fell forward, writhed a few moments, and died.

The lioness, which had crouched several paces behind while her consort was making its spring, seeing the issue of the contest, leaped forward with a roar, and coming up to the prince before he

had recovered his guard, placed its paws upon his breast, and attempted to gripe him by the throat. Mujahid grasped the savage by the windpipe, and keeping it at arm's length, prevented it from effecting its purpose; but it still kept its claws fixed in his breast, which it lacerated in a frightful manner, and at length seizing one of his hands crushed it dreadfully. Still he managed to keep its head from his body.

Mahmood, seeing the peril of his master, struck the ferocious beast with all his might upon the back with his sword, which was very keen and heavy. This assault induced the lioness to relinquish her hold and turn upon Mahmood; but her spine had been so injured from the stroke of the cimeter, that she was unable to spring. A second blow from Mahmood's ponderous weapon upon the skull, instantly seconded by another from that of the attendant, soon brought her to the ground, when she was easily dispatched; though not before she had left terrible marks of her fury upon the prince's body, who, reeking with his blood, stood gazing at his vanquished foes. The effusion was great, and the lacerations so extensive as to exhibit a fearful aspect of fatality.

Mahmood, being well skilled in the virtues of

herbs, gathered some from the hill-side, and bruising them formed a styptic which he applied to the wound, and arrested the hemorrhage. The prince declared himself able to proceed, the application of the herbs having somewhat subdued the irritation of his wounds. He was obliged to bare his body to the waist; and in order to prevent the sun from incommoding him, Mahmood and the attendant skinned one of the lions, and fixing the hide upon four bamboos, formed a sort of canopy under which Mujahid managed to creep down the remainder of the descent.

When they reached the bottom of the hill, they found their horses securely tied to the trees, as they had left them. Mujahid felt himself unable to proceed: the attendant, therefore, rode off in pursuit of some of the followers, whom he happily found at no great distance pursuing the pleasures of the chase. Among these was Musaood, who had refrained from mentioning the state of peril in which he had left his companions on the hill. Upon hearing that the prince had been wounded in the breast by his tawny foe, he concluded that the consummation of his revenge was nigh. A calm smile passed over his features; but he warily suppressed the feelings which rose with the warmth of a kindly

emotion in his bosom, and elated his heart. Affecting to commiserate the condition of Mujahid, he proceeded, accompanied by several of his followers, to the spot where the prince lay in a state of great suffering stretched upon the lion's skin; but, smiling as Musaood approached, he said—

"You had a better instinct than I, Musaood. Had I taken to the tree I might have escaped these scratches, which will keep me from the chase for some weeks, and, what is worse, from thy sister; but the cause of so long an absence will furnish my excuse."

"There 's no pleasure, prince, without its pain, and in your sufferings all your friends participate."

"Then they are great fools: it is enough that one should suffer in a matter of this kind, and you ought all to rejoice that you have had the good luck to escape. These are the little contingencies of lion-hunting, but I shall not be the worse for it when my scratches are healed."

A litter was now made, in which the prince was laid, and carried slowly towards his father's capital. The faithful Mahmood walked by his side anticipating all his wants, and attending upon him with affectionate earnestness. In spite of the styptic, his wounds bled so copiously, that when he reach-

ed the end of his journey he was in a state of extreme exhaustion. For some weeks he was in considerable danger, which spread a general gloom through the city; but, after a severe struggle, his constitution triumphed, and he at length completely recovered.

CHAPTER V.

When Mujahid had recovered from his wounds, he renewed his addresses to the sister of Musaood, who finding that she could no longer delay the gratification of the prince's desires without a direct breach of promise, determined to bring the thing to an immediate issue. She had for some time encouraged his proposals of dishonourable love, though without being guilty of any criminal intercourse: she had done this for a sinister purpose, and was still loth to give up the hope of seeing the slayer of her father meet with that retribution in this world which she thought he deserved. She cared not how her own reputation was endangered, so long as she could see the man punished by whom she had been deprived of a parent she tenderly loved. She did not forget, too, that his hand was stained with the blood of her lover; and although this was done in self-defence, it nevertheless did not abate in her judgment the odiousness of the deed.

Toghluk Beg had been long attached to her, and it was this attachment which urged him to risk his life against the valour and personal strength of a man notorious through his father's kingdom for the invincible force of his arm. The daughter of Moobarik could not forgive the double injury which she had received at the hands of the king's son; and in order the more securely to effect the purpose so long entertained by herself and her brother, she finally came to the resolution of admitting Mujahid to the enjoyment which he sought, indifferent to consequences, save the accomplishment of her revenge.

When next she saw her brother, "Musaood," she said, "the enemy seems to have a charmed life: no sword can reach him, and he is even proof against the claws of the lion."

"My sister, his time will come yet."

"So you have said for years; and yet he is abroad in his might, and the world appears to fall prostrate before him. How is this colossus to be upheaved?"

"By constant dripping, water will wear down the mountain to a level with the valley."

"But we cannot wait so slow a process, brother.

Can you suggest no means of a speedier vengeance?"

"He loves you, my sister."

"Well, that won't kill him!"

"No; but you return his love with hatred, and that may."

"Hatred is of itself passive."

"Still it may instigate the hand to urge the dagger home."

"Then I must yield to his passions: an act against which my soul recoils."

"His death were worth any sacrifice. Had I a thousand reputations I would relinquish them all to see him dead before me."

"You sanction, then, my infamy?"

"It will be neutralised by the event. If it bring retribution upon the head of our father's destroyer, it will be a filial oblation, and do you everlasting honour."

"The sacrifice shall be made; and may the desired issue be speedy! It is, however, a hard thing to dissemble in the presence of an object whom the heart loathes; how shall I endure the caresses of such a man?"

"As sick men take bitters, for the cure they

bring. It will heal thy hatred, sister, by removing the cause of it: and will not that be your sufficient reward?"

"It is like making one pass to paradise through a path of fire."

"Remember, that when the paradise is gained, you have all joy and no more suffering."

"What part do you intend to play in this sanguinary drama?"

"Do you but make the opportunity, and I am ready to drive the dagger home to his heart. I must, however, do it where even the winds cannot murmur an alarm."

"Agreed; I will sacrifice my fair fame to the retribution we owe to a father's spirit."

Thus was the foul conspiracy against the prince's life hatched by the brother and sister. They brought over to their purposes two disaffected nobles, who entertained an inveterate animosity against Mujahid, because he had punished their cowardice with disgrace during his expedition against Krishin Ray.

The prince, unsuspicious of treachery, visited the siren who had won his affections, with a full conviction that his passion was returned with equal warmth. He provided for her a splendid mansion and a numerous retinue, devoting most of his time

to the society of his enchantress. She feigned affection so artfully, that he imagined himself the idol of her heart; but Mahmood, who suspected her sincerity, though he had no suspicion of her treachery, frequently told him that he was deceived. This rather begot a coldness in the prince towards his faithful armour-bearer; the latter, however, did not abate an atom of his attachment towards his master, whom he looked upon as the dupe of an artful woman, and whose interests he watched with a vigilance which fully showed that they were no less dear to him than his own.

"Fair one," said Mujahid one day, "am I deceived in thinking that you love me?"

"Why this question?"

"Nay, that is no answer."

"But surely I am justified in seeking to know why my affection is suspected. Tell me candidly, have I ever given you just cause to suspect it?"

"No."

"Then you wrong me by your suspicions. Some enemy has attempted to poison your mind, and it is but fitting I should know who that enemy is."

"You can have no enemy, my sweet flower! except the blights; and they will not pass over thee yet."

"Sooner than you may dream of, if I am to be doubted by one for whom I have sacrificed so much. Remember, that the flower is prostrated by the sun, when his scorching rays fall on it, as well as by the tempest; so love may be as completely subverted by suspicion as by the fiercest hatred: it cannot exist but in an atmosphere of mutual confidence."

Convinced by her specious manner that he was beloved, whatever suspicions might have previously existed soon passed from his mind.

About this time his father dying, he succeeded to the sovereignty of the Deccan. His accession was solemnized with great rejoicings; but the secret conspiracy against his life was not quelled, only retarded by this event. He lavished immense sums of money upon the favourite who was secretly plotting his destruction, nor would he listen to a suspicion breathed against the fervency of her attachment, of which the faithful armour-bearer still ventured occasionally to express his doubts.

Musaood's duplicity was now redoubled. His apparent zeal for the interests of the king blinded all but Mahmood, whose distrust became excited in proportion as the apparent earnestness of the

other for his master's welfare was displayed. It happened that he one day overheard part of a conversation which passed between the brother and sister, that confirmed his suspicions of intended mischief; and he resolved to acquaint the king, in defiance of the royal interdiction not to introduce the subject again in his presence.

Appearing one morning before the sovereign, he said, " A good subject must not fear to incur the displeasure of a kind master, where danger is likely to accrue to the one, which the other, by a timely warning, may avert."

" What means this, Mahmood? Annoy me not with any of your silly suspicions; you know I have forbidden you to speak of them in my presence."

" I know it; but my love for a good king and generous master will not allow me to be silent, when I have reason to apprehend that danger is near him."

" What grounds have you for so supposing?"

" Musaood and his sister are frequently closeted, and I overheard the former say to the latter, but a few days ago, 'Our revenge has been long baffled, but the consummation draws near.'"

" Why should you apply this to me, when I

have secured the affection of the one and the fidelity of the other?"

"Professedly you have: but kings are not always the best skilled in reading human hearts; they too frequently mistake the mask for the countenance."

The king smiled. "Mahmood," said he, "how long have you been a decipherer of the unwritten records of human character? Do you not think that you may chance to be mistaken as well as other men?"

"Beyond question: but no one can deny the policy of being upon one's guard, even in a state of the greatest apparent security. The profoundest calms are frequently the precursors of violent tempests:—and what is seen in the natural, may likewise occur in the moral, world."

"But would you have me live in a state of perpetual suspicion, with that void in my heart arising from the absence of confidence, which is one of the most grievous penalties of our existence?"

"No; but I would not have you too rashly trust, and, indeed, never until you have well weighed the characters whom you admit to your friendship."

"And have I not done so? Have you not won

my confidence?—and have I ever found reason to regret having bestowed it upon you?"

Mahmood was rather staggered; he felt the truth of the observation; but still determined not to allow the king to remain blind to his insecurity, without striving to put him upon his guard, he said, "Men must be judged by their actions."

"Precisely so; and Musaood has never given me cause to suspect his fidelity."

"What has he ever done to render him an object of trust?"

"Nothing, at all events, that should render him an object of suspicion."

"My sovereign, I do not suspect upon slight grounds; I have seen frequent and secret meetings; I have heard ambiguous words uttered, and am willing to risk my head upon the truth of what I assert, that your royal safety is not secure from secret machinations. Having put my royal master upon his guard, my duty is performed."

Mujahid Shah, though he had the strongest reliance on the integrity of his armour-bearer, and a sincere esteem for him, yet looked upon his suspicions as chimerical, and took no measures to counteract any plots that might at that moment be ripening against his life. His passion for the sister

of Musaood was unabated, and he treated her with distinguished regard.

He one day declared to her his intention of passing the night in the house she occupied, at which she expressed herself extremely flattered, and immediately communicated the information to Musaood.

"My brother," said she, "the king sleeps here to-night, and the opportunity so long sought after may be now embraced."

"What do you propose?"

"That Mujahid should die this night by your dagger."

"If you will show me that his death can be safely accomplished, I am ready to become the instrument."

"Go and seek your two confederates, and introduce them into the house; I will let you into the king's chamber at midnight;—the work is then easy."

"But does not his armour-bearer always sleep in an adjoining apartment?"

"Yes: he, however, will be easily disposed of. I will prepare his evening meal: he shall be deaf to the cries of his master when they come."

"Could you not contrive to remove his arms?"

"What will signify arms to a man who has not the power of using them? Do you quail, Musaood? Don't be shamed by a woman! Such an opportunity does not occur every day. Embrace it, or let it pass, as you please: upon your choice depends whether we ever again meet as brother and sister. You need not be told that kindred foes are the most deadly."

This peremptory insinuation immediately decided Musaood. It was arranged that he should repair to the house, with his two confederates, so soon as night closed in.

In the evening Mahmood's curry had been prepared for him; but labouring under an excited state of mind, and having a presentiment of evil which he could not repress, he did not taste it. Flinging himself upon his couch, he lay feverish and restless.

About two hours after he had retired to rest, hearing a noise in the adjoining room, he rose and listened. He could distinguish voices in a whisper, but not a word reached his ear. There was sufficient light to discern the dim outlines of three persons at the entrance to the royal chamber. He was not kept long in suspense, for after the lapse of a few moments a female figure opened the door, and the three men entered. Mahmood, drawing

his sword, instantly followed. Upon reaching the door of his master's room, he saw Musaood and his two companions armed with daggers. The king was lying asleep upon his couch, and the treacherous confederate of the assassins standing, with a lamp in her hand, near his head.

Without an instant's pause Mahmood cried, in a loud voice, " Rise, Mujahid Shah! you are beset by murderers!" at the same time cutting down one of the assassins. The sovereign, awakened by the noise, started from his bed, just as Musaood was about to plunge a dagger into his body. The blow had already descended, but Mujahid caught it upon his arm, receiving a severe wound. He instantly laid hold of the assassin by the wrist, wrenched the dagger from his feeble grasp, and buried it in his heart.

The third confederate, seeing the fate of his two companions, rushed from the chamber. Mahmood, seizing his lasso, which was at hand, pursued the criminal, and casting the cord round his legs as he quitted the house, tripped him up, and brought him to the ground. He was immediately secured, and conducted before the king.

" At whose instigation did you attempt the life of your sovereign?"

"My own!" answered the noble firmly.

"What was your object?"

"To get rid of a tyrant!"

"Was that woman your accomplice?" asked Mujahid Shah, pointing to the siren who had placed his life in jeopardy.

"No: she is innocent."

The wretched woman, who had stood pale and abashed before the royal presence, immediately recovered her composure, and affected to repel the suspicion with indignation.

The accomplice of her brother did not betray her. He would reveal nothing, but made up his mind to die with that sullen resolution so frequently witnessed at public executions. The king, summoning two attendants, ordered them to take the traitor into an adjoining apartment and strangle him. This was accordingly done, and his body thrown from the window. By the time Mujahid Shah quitted the house in the morning, nothing but a skeleton was seen upon the spot where the strangled corpse had been cast the preceding night.

The sovereign having so narrowly escaped, was reminded by the faithful Mahmood of the policy of withdrawing himself from the woman who had obtained so entire an ascendency over his heart;

but such was his infatuation, that he could not believe her guilty. She had been pronounced innocent by the confederate of her brother; and so complete was her empire over him, that he would not allow himself to suppose her implicated in the conspiracy against him. She affected to curse her brother's memory, not only for the murderous act of lifting his arm against his sovereign's life, but likewise for involving her in the suspicion of having been an accomplice in so wicked a design.

"Make your mind easy," said the king, in reply to her asseverations of innocence; "my confidence in your affection is not to be shaken. A woman does not hate out of mere wantonness the man to whom she has relinquished all that is most prized by her sex. Great sacrifices are only made for those we love, and for me you have made the greatest."

"I fear I have an enemy in your armour-bearer," said the artful siren; "and cannot but feel apprehensive that he will eventually tear me from your heart: this fear is a perpetual sting in my bosom. I have never given him any cause of offence; and yet he continually pours the poison of prejudice into the king's ear."

Mujahid Shah was silent. He could not but feel the force of this observation, and it struck him that

Mahmood's prejudice was altogether unjustifiable. In spite of his late gallantry in defending his master's life, the king was angered at the hostility which his armour-bearer evidently entertained against the object of the royal affections, and he treated him with unusual coldness — sometimes even with asperity.

Within a few months after the late attack upon the life of Mujahid Shah, Musaood's sister had completely steeped his heart in the infatuation of dotage. He felt perfectly secure of her affection; and finding that all suspicion had subsided, she determined to perpetrate with her own hand the deed of blood which her late brother had failed to accomplish.

One night, when she retired to rest with the sovereign, concealing a dagger under the bed-clothes, she awaited with tremulous impatience to see her victim lulled in slumber. His senses gradually faded into unconsciousness, and he slept heavily. She drew the weapon slowly from its concealment. Her hand trembled. She cautiously bared the king's chest, and, compressing her lips, plunged into his heart the instrument of death. Mujahid started from his sleep; he saw the night-dress of his murderess stained with blood, and her hand still upon

the dagger. Feeling his senses fast fading, he grasped her by the throat, held her a few moments in his death-gripe, flung her with his last effort of expiring strength upon the floor strangled, and fell dead beside her.

Historical Summary.

Heg. 790. Feroze Toghluk was succeeded on the throne of Delhi by his grandson, Gheias-ood-Deen Toghluk, who was murdered, after a reign of only five months and a few days. — A. D. 1388.

Heg. 791. The late king's murderers raised to the throne Aboo Bukr, another grandson of Feroze Toghluk; he was deposed after a reign of eighteen months, and succeeded by his uncle, Nasir-ood-Deen Mahomed Toghluk. — 1389.

Heg. 793. Mahomed, after having silenced all opposition, entered Delhi in the month Rumzan, and ascending the throne, assumed the title of Nasir-ood-Deen Mahomed. — 1390.

Heg. 794. The Vizier Islam Chan was condemned to death for a projected revolt, on the evidence of his own nephew Hajoo, a Hindoo, who swore falsely against him, in consequence, as it is supposed, of his uncle having embraced the faith of Islam. — 1391.

Heg. 795. The king was taken ill of a fever, at Mahomedabad, and became delirious for some days. — 1392.

Heg. 797. Mahomed, having suffered a relapse of the fever, died, after a short reign of six years, and was succeeded by his son Humayoon, who took the name of Secunder, but was suddenly cut off, forty-five days — 1394.

A. D. after his accession to the throne, [illegible] Mahmood, a younger son of Nasir-ood-Deen M[illegible]ed, succeeded him.

1396. Heg. 799. Gheias-ood-Deen [illegible] his father's throne in the Deccan, and, having given offence to one of the household slaves, was dethroned by him, and confined in the fort of Sagur.

1397. Heg. 800. Shums-ood-Deen, brother to the deposed king, was raised to the throne, but was dethroned after a reign of five months and seven days; the slave being put to death by Gheias-ood-Deen, whom he had deposed and blinded.

1398. Heg. 801. Ameer Timoor, commonly called Tamerlane, arrived on the banks of the Indus, took the town of Bhutnere, ravaged the whole country, and having, in different encounters with the idolaters, made nearly a hundred thousand prisoners, ordered them all to be massacred. The conqueror made himself master of Delhi, where he caused himself to be proclaimed Emperor, and the usual titles to be read in his name in all the mosques. The fine mosque, built by Feroze Toghluk, on the stones of which he had inscribed the history of his reign, was so much admired by Timoor, that he carried the same architects and masons from Delhi to Sarmakand to build one there upon a similar plan. Having given up the city to a general pillage, and committed a dreadful massacre of the inhabitants, the conqueror commenced his retreat to his own country. After a while, those who had quitted the city returned to their homes, and Delhi in a short time assumed its former appearance of populousness and splendour.

1408. Heg. 811. Mahmood Toghluk returned to Delhi.

1412. Heg. 814. The king, indulging too eagerly in the

A. D.

diversion of . ing, caught a fever, of which he died. With 'ell the kingdom of Delhi from the race of T · adopted slaves of the Emperor Shahab-ooc .. hoory, who were of the second dynasty of the Mahomedan princes of India. The disastrous and inglorious reign of Mahmood Toghluk continued, from first to last, twenty years and two months.

1412. Heg. 815. Dowlut Chan Lody, an Afghan by birth, was raised to the throne by general consent of the nobles, after the death of Mahomed Toghluk; but was deposed and put to death by Khizr Chan, after a nominal reign of one year and three months.

1414. Heg. 817. Khizr Chan ascended the throne of Delhi, and was the first of the fourth dynasty of her kings. In the first year of his government, he sent Mullik Tohfa with an army towards Kuttehr, which place he reduced. Nursing Ray was driven to the mountains, but upon paying a ransom, his territories were restored to him. This year a band of Toorks, the adherents of Beiram Chan, assassinated Mullik Ladho, governor of Surhind, and took possession of his country.

1418. Heg. 821. A conspiracy was formed against the king's life; but having detected the conspiracy, Khizr Chan commanded the household troops to fall upon them and put them to death.

1421. Heg. 824. The king died in the city of Delhi, and, as a token of respect for his memory, the citizens wore black for three days.* The nobles having assembled, elevated Moobarik, the son of Khizr Chan, to the vacant throne.

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* The Mahomedans as well as Christians wear black for mourning

A. D. 1422. Heg. 825. The king, having marched to Lahore, ordered the ruined palaces and fortifications to be repaired, and returned to Delhi.

1422. Heg. 826. The king deposed Mullik Secundur from the visierat, and raised Suvuur-ool-Moolk to that office.

1426. Heg. 830. Moobarik laid siege to Byana for sixteen days, but, on the desertion of part of the garrison, Mahomed Chan, the governor, surrendered at discretion, and, with a rope about his neck, was led into the royal presence.

1428. Heg. 832. The king marched to Mewat, and entirely subdued that country, compelling the inhabitants to pay him tribute.

1430. Heg. 833. Ameer Sheikh Ally having made himself master of Toolumba in Moultan, plundered the place, and put to death all the men able to bear arms. He likewise burned the town, and carried the wives and children of the inhabitants into captivity.

1432. Heg. 835. The king deprived his vizier of the government of Lahore.

1433. Heg. 836. Mukdooma Jehan, the king's mother, died at Delhi.

1435. Heg. 839. Moobarik ordered a city to be founded upon the banks of the Jusuna, which he called Moobarikabad, and made an excursion towards Surhind, in order to take the diversion of the chase. On the way he received advices that Surhind was taken, and the head of the rebel Folad was presented to him, after which he returned to the new city.

1435. Heg. 839. According to custom, on the ninth of the month, Rujub Moobarik went to worship in a mosque lately built in the new city, with only a few attendants, and was put to death by a band of Hindoos clothed in

armour, who entered the sacred edifice while the king was performing his devotions. The Vizier immediately raised to the throne Mahomed, one of the grandsons of Khisr Chan. One Ranoo, a slave of the Vizier, being nominated collector of the revenues of Bayana, endeavouring to obtain possession of the fort, was opposed and slain by Yusoof Chan Lodi. A. D.

Heg. 840. The Vizier, aided by several conspirators, broke into the royal apartments with drawn swords, in order to put the king to death. The latter, however, having intimation of their design, placed a guard in readiness to counteract it, which, on a certain signal, rushed out upon the conspirators, who fled. The Vizier was killed as he was passing the door, and the other conspirators, being afterwards taken, were publicly executed. 1436

Heg. 849. The king's power decaying rapidly, the Zemindars of Bayana placed themselves under the government of Sultan Mahmood Khiljy, of Malwa, and Syud Mahomed falling sick, he died a natural death, leaving behind him the character of a weak and dissolute prince. He reigned twelve years, and was succeeded by his son Alla-ood Deen. 1445.

Heg. 854. Alla-ood-Deen, having adopted Bheilole Lody as his son, formally abdicated the throne in his favour, on condition of being permitted to reside without molestation at Budaoon. Alla-ood-Deen dwelt at Budaoon until his death, which happened A. H. 883, A. D. 1478, his reign at Delhi being seven years, and his retirement at Budaoon nearly twenty-eight. 1450.

The Rival Brothers.

The Rival Brothers.

CHAPTER I.

GHEIAS-OOD-DEEN, a young and handsome youth in his eighteenth year, was attended by a slave who was scattering perfume round the spot upon which his master sat. This youth had just ascended the throne of his father, late king of the Deccan, and gave promise of being a popular sovereign. In conformity with the practice of his predecessor, he behaved very graciously to all the members of his court, remembering the zealous supporters of his family, and distinguishing them with especial marks of favour. He raised several of his most deserving nobles to places of distinction, and rewarded his late father's faithful domestics with offices of trust. This greatly excited the jealousy of Lallcheen, principal Toorky slave of the household, who not only aspired to obtain his freedom, but to be advanced to some post of honour. He

was now in the presence of his young sovereign, towards whom he had frequently evinced his dissatisfaction by certain marks which, though they apparently expressed nothing, were nevertheless sufficiently intelligible.

"Lallcheen," said the young king, "why do you appear thus dissatisfied? My conduct, since my accession to the throne of my father, seems to have diffused general content, and why should you be an exception?"

"Slaves have no great cause for satisfaction under any condition of bondage; but when faithful servants are not rewarded, they have just grounds for complaint."

"They can have none whatever, so long as the master is not unjust. Slaves cannot expect to be treated like princes."

"But they can expect to be treated like men, who have minds to appreciate, and hearts to feel the difference, between justice and tyranny."

"But I think it an act of injustice to place a slave upon a level with a free man. By the condition of his destiny, the fetters of slavery have been cast upon him, and he must wear them. I do not approve of elevating bondmen to posts of honour."

"Has the sovereign forgotten that the queen-

mother was originally one of that degraded class which the king thinks it unjust to dignify?"

"No woman is degraded by her condition, because she is the mere instrument in the Deity's hands for perpetuating the human race. The son derives neither rank nor degradation from the mother;—it therefore matters not whether she be a slave or a princess."

"The king reasons like a profound casuist," said Lallcheen with an ill-disguised sneer; "and I feel how utterly impossible it is for a slave to beat down the lofty fences of royal logic."

"You do not, however, seem very heartily convinced by it; but of this I would have you in future assured—that it will be one of the principles of my government not to place my bondmen upon a level with free men."

Lallcheen had been a favourite with the late king, whose memory his son held in great reverence; he therefore bore with the liberty of the servitor who during the last reign had received a sort of licence to express his thoughts without reserve, being a person of considerable intelligence and of an active, inquisitive mind.

Lallcheen was exceedingly mortified at the sentiments expressed by the young king. They were

scored upon his mind with literal fidelity, and he secretly meditated revenge, though he did not show it openly. He had sprung from a race of bold haughty barbarians, who held freedom to be the pole-star in the firmament of human glory; and the friction from the fetters of bondage seemed to rub against the very core of his heart. He panted for liberty as a drowning man does for the air which the waters exclude from his lips; and the disappointment with which the sovereign's definitive resolution was charged came over his spirit with a crushing burden that for a moment seemed to weigh it down to the lowest level of degradation. His fierce passions, however, which had long slumbered under the assuasive kindness of his late master, rose to his relief, casting off the burden from his soul as with an arm of might, and lifting it where it could soar unincumbered from the trammels of its griefs, devise new motives of action, and nerve itself to high and important resolves.

The slave had a daughter, the fame of whose beauty had reached the ears of Gheias-ood-Deen. She was as celebrated for her wit as for her personal attractions, and her skill in music was so perfect that she eclipsed all the regular professors of the capital. There was not an accomplishment of

which she was not mistress. Her celebrity had already gained her many admirers, and the king expressed a desire to see her.

Lallcheen was not sorry at the opportunity which this circumstance might afford him of mortifying the sovereign, or of punishing him more effectually, and therefore determined to throw the lovely Agha in his master's way in the palace gardens, to which the slave had free access.

The king was one morning walking in the gardens with his brother Shums-ood-Deen, a remarkably beautiful boy in his sixteenth year.

"Who is that yonder, brother," asked the latter, "by the marble tank?"

"I know not; but, by the gait and figure, something to admire."

"She retires: I fear we shall lose the opportunity of ascertaining who she may be, for handsome strangers are not wont to visit the private gardens of the palace."

"Go quickly and bid her stop;—say the king desires a word with her."

Shums-ood-Deen bounded forward, and overtook the stranger as she was retiring behind an arbour through a path which led to a back entrance into the gardens.

"Stay, damsel," said the prince; "the king desires a word with you."

The stranger turned, and exhibited to the wondering eyes of the royal youth features and a form of such extraordinary beauty that he gazed in speechless admiration. Agha, for it was she, stood before him with a demeanour of undisturbed modesty without uttering a word, awaiting the sovereign's approach. Gheias-ood-Deen was no less amazed than his brother with the houri form upon which his eyes, as he approached, instantly became riveted.

"Do I," said he, "behold the marvel of my capital, to whom report has ascribed such unrivalled perfections?"

"The king beholds the daughter of his slave," said Agha, with her eye fixed somewhat proudly on the youthful monarch.

"He is henceforward free for the daughter's sake," said the sovereign, approaching and offering to take her hand.

She retired, and said gravely, "I am an intruder here; may I be permitted to withdraw? It shall be my care not to intrude again upon the king's privacy."

"Such intrusions are blessings for which the

proudest monarchs of the earth would barter their sceptres. Talk not of intruding, Queen of the Graces!—not only these gardens are henceforth free to thee, but every part of the palace. The sunshine of thy smile will produce a harvest of delight wherever it glows."

"The daughter of a slave is but an abject thing at best; but the king's mockery tends to remind her how complete is her abjection."

Saying this, she withdrew, leaving the two brothers in a state of blended admiration and amazement. Shums-ood-Deen, in the ardour of youthful enthusiasm, had he a throne to offer, felt that he would willingly make her the partner of it on the instant; but Gheias-ood-Deen was influenced by a less sanctified passion. He thought that the offspring of a slave could not for a moment object to be the concubine of a king; nor did he imagine that the slightest impediment would be raised to the proposal, which he contemplated the instant he saw the exquisite beauty of Lallcheen's daughter.

"What think you, brother, of this girl?" asked Gheias-ood-Deen.

"That until now I had no idea of the beautiful inhabitants of Paradise. I feel my soul elated!

Oh! with such a creature I could enjoy more than happiness in this lower world! Had I a throne, she should be my queen."

"Silly boy!" said the brother, pettishly; "the daughters of slaves do not become thrones."

"But, brother, the daughter of a slave is at this moment the mother of a king."

"A bad precedent is not to be followed; therefore no more of this. You must discourage your raptures for the child of Lallcheen: she must become part of my household. I love her, but as monarchs love menials—for their pleasures; and my purpose must not be crossed, Shums-ood-Deen."

This was said with a deliberate emphasis of tone that implied a threat, if obedience did not follow the injunction. It greatly mortified the prince. He was silent, but nevertheless resolved to contravene the designs of his brother, whose impure intentions towards Agha were to him like a profanation of the sanctuary. His youthful enthusiasm was on fire, and he determined, if possible, to counteract the king's purposes by immediately making honourable love to the slave's daughter; for he could not associate the idea of degradation with anything so perfect. It seemed to him as if the

finger of Allah were especially to be traced in that fair work of his creation, and that therefore she ought to be elevated to the highest earthly dignities, instead of being allowed to wither in an atmosphere of social degradation. He lost no time in seeking Lallcheen, whom he found a ready listener to his sallies of enthusiastic admiration for the beautiful girl who had that morning captivated his youthful heart. The slave's hostility towards his master made him attend with greater readiness to the proposals of the prince, who at once declared his readiness to marry the lovely Agha.

"But, prince," said Lallcheen, "what will the king say to such a connexion as you propose? He thinks that bondmen ought to live in their fetters; he will never, therefore, sanction your alliance with slaves."

"I am free," said Shums-ood-Deen, "to marry whom I will; he has no right to control me in that which essentially regards my domestic happiness. I have resolved to choose for myself, and only await your consent to make me happy."

"Prince, it will not appear flattery to say that I honour your liberal sentiments—that is a matter of course. If you can secure my child's consent, you have mine upon one condition, that I obtain

my freedom; for it would ill become the dignity of Shums-ood-Deen to be the son-in-law of a slave."

"This I promise: your freedom is a boon which the king will scarcely fail to grant to a brother's supplication. Your daughter would be cheaply purchased at the price of an empire."

The wily father saw that the greatest advantage was to be drawn from the boyish enthusiasm of Shums-ood-Deen; and his hopes of casting back upon the king the odium which he had made to fall so heavily upon his bond-servant, rose rapidly to their meridian as he listened to the declarations of attachment towards his daughter from the lips of his master's brother. He sought his child, and prepared her for the visit of Shums-ood-Deen, at the same time relating to her his earnest professions of honourable attachment. She received the communication with undisguised pleasure, for she had beheld the prince with more than common satisfaction. His youthful beauty, untainted by the habitual exercise of gross passion, had made a favourable impression upon her; and she felt gratified by the undisguised expression of delight which passed over his glowing countenance the moment he beheld her.

"Now, my child," said the father, "you have

made a flattering conquest: it is no common thing to find a prince entertaining honourable intentions towards those looked upon by the world as excluded from all society but the lowest: appreciate this as it deserves."

"I shall, my father; but withal, flattering as such approbation is, it may prove the mere effervescence of passion in a youthful bosom, that will pass away with the occasion. At all events, be assured I shall never give my consent to a union with any man upon whom I have not first bestowed my heart."

With this understanding Lallcheen prepared to introduce the prince, who had declared his intention of visiting her father's house that evening.

CHAPTER II.

Although a slave, Lallcheen was possessed of considerable wealth, and his house would not have disgraced the dignity of a nobleman. On the day Gheias-ood-Deen had seen his slave's daughter, he summoned the father to his presence.

" I have been considering thy services, Lallcheen, and shall reward them; from this moment thou art a free man."

" I accept the royal boon with a bondman's gratitude. But I marvel at this sudden change in the king's sentiments."

" Thou hast a daughter."

" True."

" For her sake, I recall my resolution of the morning, and give thee freedom; but thou must pay the price."

" Name it; I am wealthy."

" I only demand a single jewel."

" If I possess it, the sovereign has only to sig-

nify his wish. What jewel does the king demand?"

"Thy daughter."

"Ha! thy slave must feel the honour deeply; but will not the monarch of the Deccan be dishonoured by wedding a slave's daughter?"

"Ay, in truth, he would, Lallcheen, if he were weak enough to wed a slave's daughter; but of that he dreams not. If I give thee liberty, the lovely Agha must be mine upon my own terms."

"King, I am your bondman, but not your pander. I despise liberty upon the terms you offer it. My child would scorn an impure alliance even with a mightier monarch than Gheias-ood-Deen. She has suitors of proud lineage, who woo her with honourable love."

"Then my offer is refused? 'Tis well! the power that governs an empire is not to be slighted with impunity. You will repent this rash decision,—retire."

Lallcheen did retire, more than ever incensed against his royal master. He was stung deeply at the insult offered to his child, in the supposition that she would barter her purity for her father's freedom. He felt himself, moreover, grievously wronged by his royal master harbouring the thought that he

could be base enough to sell his daughter's honour at any price. It was an injury neither to be forgiven nor forgotten. He quitted the royal presence with a throbbing heart and burning brow;—the blood had receded from his cheek and lips when he entered the apartment of his child. He found her singing an air in a voice that would have enchanted the nightingales of Cashmere, or drawn a tear of sympathy from the eye of a Peri. It was a strain of exquisite tenderness: the parent's emotions were calmed at the sound of her celestial voice; but the blood returned not to those channels from which the silent struggles of passion had banished it.

"My father," said Agha, as he entered; "why so pale?"

"I have been disturbed, my child, by the king."

"How?"

"He would give me freedom."

"Well, would not that be a blessed deliverance?"

"At the price of my child's honour?"

Agha's cheeks flushed,—they were overspread with an intense crimson. The blood seemed to ebb rapidly from her heart, which fluttered for a moment; but the reflux almost instantly came and

poured in upon it a tide of womanly indignation. She continued silent, but the base proposals of one brother imparted by contrast in her thoughts a beautiful colouring to the honourable intentions of the other; and she was already half prepared to love Shums-ood-Deen, and detest his royal relative.

"Well, Agha, what answer shall I return to the master who honours his servant by loving that servant's daughter?"

"Does my father require that I should frame an answer. Could not his own heart suggest it? My answer would be precisely such as I should return to a snake, were it to ask if I would permit it to sting me."

"I have anticipated your feelings, my child, and given the sovereign no hopes. He threatens violence; his evil purposes, therefore, must be counteracted by artifice. You must feign acquiescence with his wishes. Having once hushed him into security, I will invite him to a banquet, under the promise of resigning you to his possession, and he shall then see that impunity is not the indefeasible right of kings."

In obedience to this determination, Lallcheen affected to concur with his master's views; but pre-

vailed upon him on some plausible pretence to delay enforcing his claim to Agha for a few weeks, promising implicit obedience to his wishes at the end of a specified period.

Meanwhile Shums-ood-Deen had been daily admitted to the presence of Agha, upon whose young heart his generous affection had made a deep impression. She could not help contrasting his disinterested and honourable attachment with the selfish and debasing passion of his brother; and in proportion as her respect for the one declined, her love of the other increased. The father was gratified at witnessing this growing fondness; it roused his parental ambition: he was proud of his daughter, and longed to see her elevated to that distinction which he considered her born to adorn. Shums-ood-Deen was heir apparent to the throne of the Deccan. He might reign, and the beautiful Agha become a queen. These thoughts roused her father's soul and stirred his passions to fiercer hostility against his royal master, who, as he considered, had so deeply injured him. Though the king was popular among his nobles, yet by some he was much disliked, and those who were hostile to the claims of the elder brother would willingly encourage the elevation of the younger.

Lallcheen took every opportunity which offered of making himself acquainted with the feelings of the nobles. Those who had not been raised to posts of honour and emolument in the state, were dissatisfied and ripe for a change of government; but were kept in awe by the large majority of the well-affected. The sovereign fancying himself secure in the affection of his subjects, took no care to subdue the murmurings of such as he considered unworthy of the royal patronage; he had, therefore, a greater number of enemies than he was aware of.

Lallcheen's plot rapidly advanced towards maturity, and he at length invited the king to an entertainment, promising that he would resign his daughter to him. Gheias-ood-Deen received the invitation with a thrill of passionate satisfaction. Agha not being privy to her father's treachery, he had taken care on that day to remove her from the house on some plausible pretence, in order that she might not interfere with the execution of his scheme. It had been already arranged that she and the king's brother should be married at the beginning of the ensuing year.

With Gheias-ood-Deen were also invited his chief Omrahs, who were all much attached to his person.

At an early hour the royal party arrived, and were welcomed by the slave with extravagant marks of loyalty. The nobles, astonished at the splendour of the entertainment, freely expressed their surprise that a bondman should possess so much wealth.

"Wealth," said Lallcheen, "will not purchase freedom, if it does not please the monarch to grant it."

"What can compensate for the sacrifice of honest services?" said Gheias-ood-Deen, with a condescending smile; "I value them more, Lallcheen, than your gold."

"But not more than my daughter, king," said the slave, significantly.

"No, no; all things have their price. I set your ransom high; you will, therefore, value your freedom according to the price paid for it."

The guests placed themselves at the banquet. Every luxury which the country produced was there in generous profusion. The rarest wines sparkled in golden chalices, and freemen waited upon the guests of the slave. The wine went round, and the king anticipating the joy of being presented to the beautiful Agha, drank liberally of the enlivening beverage. He began to be exhilarated.

Nautch girls were introduced to heighten the pleasures of the entertainment: they swam through the mazes of the dance with a light, floating motion, tinkling the silver bells which hung from their delicately small wrists and ankles, waving their arms with a graceful undulation, that gave exquisite elegance to the curving motions of their bodies; every now and then throwing their long veils over their faces, and peeping through them with eyes that might have kindled a ray of admiration even under the tub of Diogenes.

The guests began to express their delight by loud acclamations, and it had already become evident that the sovereign was considerably elated by the wine he had taken. Lallcheen had been cautious in keeping himself perfectly calm. He drank but sparingly, and was therefore in a condition to take the best advantage of the state of his guests. When he considered the favourable moment had arrived for the consummation of his vengeance, he commanded the nautch girls to retire, and then in a whisper requested the king would order his nobles to withdraw, that his obedient host might introduce his daughter.

Gheias-ood-Deen, elated at the thought of beholding the beautiful creature who had so inflamed

his passions, commanded his Omrahs to quit the room, as he desired to have some private conversation with the host. Excited by wine, and unsuspicious of evil consequences, they obeyed with ready alacrity, singing as they reeled from the apartment, and laughing stupidly at the fatuity of their own thoughts. When the guests had retired, the traitor led his sovereign respectfully to an ottoman, seated him, and began to arrest his attention by extravagant encomiums upon the beauty of his daughter. Gheias-ood-Deen listened with evident delight, and at length expressed himself impatient to be introduced to the idol of his love. Lallcheen perceiving that he was raised to the proper pitch, told him he would instantly go and bring the peerless Agha to his royal master and guest. Quitting the room, he shortly returned armed with a naked dagger.

"Where is your daughter?" asked the king.

"Here," replied the slave, raising the dagger, and advancing towards his sovereign with the gleaming instrument of death in his hand.

Gheias-ood-Deen, though much intoxicated, staggered towards the traitor, and attempted to wrest the weapon from his grasp; but being unable to walk steadily, he fell, and rolled down a flight of

steps. A eunuch was in the room, who, seizing the king by his hair, threw him upon his back, and pierced out his eyes with the point of a crease.

Lallcheen, perceiving that he had now gone too far to retreat, removed the wounded monarch to another apartment, and immediately despatched a messenger to the nobles who had that night been his guests, desiring in the king's name that they would immediately return. The message was delivered to each noble separately, so that one by one they reached the slave's residence. As the first who arrived entered the chamber where he had so lately partaken of Lallcheen's hospitality, he was put to death by two eunuchs, who flung a noose over his head and strangled him. Thus the whole of them were destroyed to the number of twenty-four, and their bodies cast forth a prey to jackals.

On the morrow, when Agha returned to her home, she was shocked beyond expression at the sanguinary revenge which her father had taken. Her heart was chilled: she felt that she never could again look upon her parent with respect, and the fond yearnings of her bosom grew cold. She reproached him with his cruelty, but he silenced

her with a stern rebuke. The disaffected Omrahs thronged to his house, prepared to assist him in his future views with respect to the government. The daring act of blinding the king and slaying his nobles, had produced a general panic. The people looked on in silent amazement; when Lallcheen, thinking it was high time to act definitively, placed Shums-ood-Deen, the deposed king's brother, upon the throne, and sent the latter in confinement to the fortress of Sagur.

CHAPTER III.

The conduct of Lallcheen excited great indignation: but the king had so lately given way to intemperance and the indulgence of his grosser passions, that those hopes entertained of him at his accession to the throne had subsided. He had raised many enemies by his excesses. The traitor, moreover, was supported by the queen-mother, of whom her younger son, Shums-ood-Deen, had ever been the favourite. He was extremely popular, too, among many of the Omrahs; for he was a generous youth, possessing many virtues, and no flagrant vices.

The moment his brother was deposed, Lallcheen, assisted by the influence of the queen-mother, placed Shums-ood-Deen upon the musnud. The young monarch was now eager to make Agha his queen; but she, shocked at what had passed, could not be prevailed upon, for the moment, to consent. She would not see her father, and to the king's urgent entreaties to make him happy, she replied;



"Alas! the auspices under which you reign are evil. I fear that prosperity can never track the steps of a prince whose path to the throne has been stained with blood."

"My noble Agha, we must bow to the crisis that has suddenly come upon us. I mourn the event which has elevated me to the highest of human dignities as much as you can do, and detest the agents who have placed me upon the musnud, with hands dyed in my brother's blood. But as he has been disabled, it was necessary that a sovereign should be found; and I am the next of kin. You know it to be against the canons of our constitution that a blind prince should reign. Were I to refuse to hold the sceptre, I should be looked upon with suspicion, and my life would be in perpetual peril."

"Prince, I shrink from becoming the wife of a man who has obtained his dignities by violence. I acquit you of all participation in the crime which has so suddenly made you a monarch, but will never consent to share your sullied honours. I foresee only misery from my parent's ambition. Though the deposed king would have heaped upon me the heaviest wrongs which can weigh down the spirit of a virtuous woman, still I would have left

him to the punishment which invariably awaits the wicked, administered by a higher arbiter of human dereliction than man."

"Agha!" cried the prince, passionately, "have I deserved to forfeit your love?"

"Not my love, prince; but my consent to be your bride. You must now form higher views: there is an insuperable bar between us."

"Nay, had we been united while I was only heir-apparent to the throne to which I have been just elevated, I might have soon come to that inheritance to which your father's violence has prematurely raised me."

"But then you would have ascended the musnud with honour; now, you have ascended it with disgrace."

"I am ready to relinquish all honours for you, Agha."

"That may not be: you have pushed the stone from the precipice, and, in spite of all mortal endeavours, it will roll to the bottom. Farewell, and may your reign be happy!"

One day, a singular-looking devotee was seen to cast himself upon the ground without the walls of the capital, and to pronounce, in a tone of solemn vaticination, woe to the kingdom of the Deccan.

In proof of his inspiration, the fanatic declared himself ready to fast forty days on the very spot where he then lay. He was old and withered to a mere skeleton: his age was said to exceed a hundred years; for the oldest inhabitants remembered him but as a very aged man. His hair still hung over his shoulders so copiously as to cover them like a mantle; but it was so impregnated with filth that its colour was not to be ascertained. He had no beard, save a few straggling hairs scattered over his chin like stunted bushes upon the desert rock. His ears were so long that they nearly reached his shoulders, which rose towards them with physical sympathy, as if to relieve the head from their weight. His gums were toothless, and so blackened by opium and the smoke of tobacco, that as his lips parted—and when they did, they seemed to shrink from a renewed contact, and to seek severally protection from the nose and chin—the whole mouth presented a feature of sickening deformity. Every rib in the old man's body was as traceable as the lines which mark the latitude and longitude upon a chart. The very sinews had wasted into thin, rigid cords, without either flexibility or tension.

The approach of this sainted object to the city

was a circumstance of much uneasiness to those who had acted so conspicuous a part in the recent change of government. The veneration in which he was held made them fear the effect of his crazy predictions upon the excited multitude.

Lallcheen hoped the old man would confirm his declamations by a fast of forty days; flattering himself that, by exposing to the people the delusions by which the object of their veneration evidently juggled them, he should be able to show that the fanatic was a worthless impostor. A tent was consequently ordered to be pitched over the prostrate devotee, and a number of men appointed to watch him day and night, in order to see that no human nourishment passed his lips. Two persons were constantly by his side.

Lallcheen visited him. As the traitor appeared before him, the seer raised his head; his eye instantly kindled as if with a divine afflatus, and he said, waving his arms solemnly:

"The blood of the murdered shall give life to the avenger! When slaves rebel, and grasp the thunderbolt of power, they eventually hurl it against their own heads. The web of fate is spun by different threads, but the woof of thine is black. Prepare, Lallcheen, for the explosion which thy

own ambitious hand has kindled. The match is already at the train; thou wilt soon hear and feel the desolating concussion! Woe to the destroyer!"

The slave trembled, in spite of his conviction that the saint was crazed. He dreaded the influence of his wild sallies of prophecy. Day after day passed, and neither food nor water was seen to pass the diviner's lips. The guards were astonished, and beheld him with sacred awe. They vowed they never slept: they were constantly changed, but precisely the same result followed—the inspired man was seen to taste nothing. He sat upon the cold ground, without a rag to cover him, in an apparent state of devout abstraction, never uttering a word; except now and then, when he poured out terrible denunciations of wrath against those who had blinded the late king and murdered his nobles.

Fifteen days of the term of fasting had already expired, and no change appeared in the prophet. His eyes occasionally sparkled with fierce brightness, though he said nothing, and the watchers began to grow uneasy in his company. They feared a proximity to something unearthly; and in proportion as they were impressed with this super-

stitious feeling, in their eyes their sacred charge grew more deformed and hideous. They placed themselves at the very extremity of the tent, and were so awed by his ghoul-like appearance, that they were obliged, for relief, to turn their faces to the broad sky, and remit their vigils until they had recovered their self-possession. They took it for granted, however, that he could not, like some less disgusting reptiles, feed upon the dust, and therefore hesitated not to report, at the end of their term of watching, that the saint had taken nothing but a chameleon diet, and yet was as lively as that celebrated lizard after a six months' fattening upon good wholesome air.

The people's astonishment was daily increased by the report of those persons appointed to watch the devotee. They already began to talk of dedicating a temple to him, and paying him divine honours.

On the twentieth morning of his voluntary abstinence, the venerable probationer desired that some of the authorities might be summoned to attest his having undergone half of his prescribed mortification, and to witness his performance of a holy rite. Lallcheen accordingly visited the seer.

"Behold!" said the man, "I have subsisted twenty days without earthly food, sustained by a heavenly nutriment, which the eye does not see, but the body is sensible of. This night the Prophet has visited me, and here is the sign of his coming;" saying this, he held between his bony fingers a white pebble, about the size of a plum. "Within this," he continued, "is the revelation which I shall make known to you at the termination of my penance."

Having once more exhibited the pebble, he jerked it from his fingers into his mouth, and swallowed it in an instant.

"For twenty days I need no further nourishment. A stone is neither meat nor drink, yet will it invigorate this withered body to tell you things to come. Leave me."

He could not be prevailed upon to make any further communication; but relapsed into silence. The slave was abashed before the presence of a man whom he despised, and who, he felt satisfied, was an impostor; nevertheless, he dared not commit an act of violence against one generally held to be in direct communication with Heaven. In spite of his incredulity, he could not conceive how the pretended diviner had evaded the scrutiny

of his guards. He had used every precaution to detect the imposture, without success. Day after day passed on, but the same report was every morning received that the saint had not tasted food. Multitudes flocked round the tent to behold this extraordinary man. Persons who were diseased approached to touch him, imagining that their distempers would be removed by the sacred contact. He pronounced blessings upon the poor, which won him the homage of the needy crowd who thronged to receive his benedictions. The marvel of his supernatural fast rapidly spread over the country, and people came from every part of the vicinity to behold him.

The term of his abstinence at length expired: no one had seen him taste a morsel of food or a drop of water for forty days. On the morning of the forty-first day he rose, and, quitting his tent, was greeted with profound reverence by thousands who had assembled to behold him. Money was thrown at his feet, which he picked up and scattered among the religious mendicants who had come far and near to offer him their homage. He now partook of a small quantity of milk, and then turning his face towards the holy city, repeated a certain prayer. Having poured dust upon his head, he

crossed his arms upon his breast, and invoked audibly the name of the Prophet; then came the solemn objurgation:

"Woe to the man of blood! he shall fall by the hand of him from whose eyes he has shut out the sunbeam! The sceptre shall drop from the grasp of his minion, who shall find that happiness is not the inheritance of kings. But the innocent shall not be confounded with the guilty: the slave shall be requited as becomes a regicide! The voice of our holy Prophet has spoken, and it shall come to pass!"

He dropped his arms and hobbled slowly through the crowd, who made way before him, following him with acclamations. Lallcheen was disappointed at not having been able to detect the juggle of this patriarchal deceiver. How he had managed to elude the scrutiny of the watchers was a fact which baffled his comprehension; and he was fearful that the credulity of the multitude as to the fakeer's direct communication with Heaven might lead to dangerous consequences. No doubt was entertained of the man's prophetic endowments and supernatural sustentation. That he had fasted forty days and forty nights was a fact which few questioned; and the general expectation was

that some fearful calamity was about to befall the king and his ministers. Groups of idle gossippers were seen at the corners of the streets, communicating their suspicions and whispering their fears.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Shums-ood-Deen was placed upon the musnud, intimidated by the fate of his unhappy brother, he was afraid to oppose the man who had raised him to the throne; he had therefore little more than the name of king. All the substantive power was in the hands of his late father's slave, who assumed the title of Mullik Naib, an office equivalent to regent; and the nobility who had escaped the sword, seeing no safety but in submission, bowed to his authority. The queen-mother, having been originally a slave, paid the utmost deference to the traitor who had blinded her elder son, in order that she might obviate any mischief against the younger, whom she advised to submit to the wiser counsels of his minister, observing that he was indebted to him for his crown, and that the man who had so easily deposed one brother might with equal facility depose the other. "Besides," she said, "you owe him a debt of gratitude, and, depend upon it, he will expect it to be

paid. You will find, my son, many malicious insinuations breathed into your ear against your benefactor; but let me conjure you to give them no heed, for the king who requites benefits with injury can have no security for his throne."

"Alas! mother," said the young monarch, "I have been exalted only to misery; I find the throne a seat of thorns instead of roses. My elevation has been the means of separating me for ever from the object of my soul's idolatry, and I am become a wretch whom the veriest outcast might pity."

"Nay, this is mere delusion: higher objects will engross your attention now. Alliances will be sought with you by princes; seek not, then, the attachment of slaves."

"Did you not recommend gratitude towards my benefactor?"

"True, I did; but this may be shown without marrying his daughter."

"To marry her is the one dear wish of my heart; not in order to signify my gratitude to the man who has placed me upon the pinnacle of human greatness, but to signalise my love for one who is at once an honour to her sex and to her country."

"These are youthful raptures, my son, which the cares of royalty will soon stifle."

"Never! the impress upon my heart is too deep to wear out: it will never be effaced but by the worm."

The queen-mother could not succeed in persuading her son to relinquish all thoughts of the lovely Agha, which she was anxious to do, in order that he might form an alliance that would secure him upon the throne, and render him independent of a man who might turn all his influence against him, should he be impelled by caprice or interest to serve some other object of his ambition.

Shums-ood-Deen's mother treated Lallcheen with great cordiality, and he, in return, behaved to her with much respect, sending her valuable presents, and using every method to secure her confidence; but this conduct on both sides was mere temporising, as no real cordiality subsisted between them.

It was now Lallcheen's grand aim to see his daughter united to the young king, and it mortified him extremely to find that the only impediment was her own scruples. His soul was stung at the chance of losing that reward which he had waded through blood to obtain. Disappointed ambition exasperated him against what he called the rebellion of his child, and he determined to

compel her to embrace the dignity which he had steeped his soul in guilt to secure for her. Knowing the readiness of Shums-ood-Deen to make her his queen, he was the more enraged that any impediments should arise from her who was the party that would be especially benefited by such a union; and he sought her with a determination to enforce obedience to an authority which he had never hitherto exercised in vain.

"Agha," said he, sternly, "can it be possible that you refuse to become the wife of a man whom you have confessed you love, and who is ready to make you the partner of his throne?"

"It is true, my father; I never could sit upon a throne the ascent to which is stained with the blood of its legitimate inheritor. The present king shares in the crime of his brother's deposers so long as he partakes of the fruit of their guilt."

"Girl, this is not the language of a child towards her parent: you know the first wish of my heart is that you should share his dignities with the son of my late master. If the man whom I propose you should wed were odious to you, there might be some reason in your opposition; but as this is not the case, I expect you immediately to become the wife of Shums-ood-Deen."

"That will not be while he sits upon a blood-stained throne. You are my father, and I know your power. My life is at your disposal, but not my will; you may take the one, but you shall never coerce the other!"

"No, Agha, I will not take your life, however you may rebel. But your liberty is likewise at my disposal; and depend upon it, that if you persist in a stubborn opposition to my wishes, you shall suffer penalties under captivity which you little dream of."

"I have well weighed the consequences of resistance, and am prepared to pay the penalty: I feel that the man who would not hesitate to dethrone his king would have little scruple about imprisoning his daughter. But, to put you at once out of suspense as to my determination, I tell you, firmly and solemnly, that I never will comply with your wishes. Take me to the prison you have prepared for me!"

Lallcheen did not reply, but quitted her with a blanched cheek. He was deeply vexed at this unexpected bar to his ambition from his own child. The fruits of crime were already ripening, but he perceived that they had only a flavour of bitterness. He remembered the predictions of the devotee,

and the sun of his glory grew dim—a shadow passed over it; but the disc again grew light, and he hoped that it would be no more obscured.

Difficulties now began to thicken around him. Feroze Chan and Ahmud Chan, uncles to the deposed king, had promised their brother-in-law, Mahmood Shah, father of Gheias-ood-Deen, when he was on his death-bed, that they would be faithful and loyal to his son: they accordingly served him with submission and fidelity. Being from the capital at the time their royal relative was deposed by Lallcheen, they escaped the unhappy fate of the nobles who were assassinated. Finding, however, that the king had been dispossessed and blinded, their wives instigated their husbands to avenge the indignity to which their nephew had been subjected. Feroze and Ahmud Chan readily listened to these natural appeals in favour of their injured relative; but the traitor, discovering their intentions through his emissaries, complained to Shums-ood-Deen, and, accusing those nobles of treason, demanded their instant execution. Hoping to excite the young sovereign's fears, he represented to him that their object evidently was the restoration of Gheias-ood-Deen, which would involve the death of the reigning monarch; as, the moment the deposed king were re-

stored, he would naturally wreak his vengeance upon all who had been instrumental in hurling him from his throne, among whom the man raised to that throne would be one of the first to suffer.

Shums-ood-Deen being emboldened by the known influence and bravery of his uncles, resisted these importunities of the slave, whose imperious exercise of authority already began to be exceedingly vexatious. Seeing that the opposition was likely to become serious, Lallcheen sought the queen-mother, and artfully representing to her the perils by which her son was beset, obtained her promise to co-operate with him in counteracting the confederacy forming against the government of her younger son.

"If," said he, "we do not get rid of those Omrahs, the worst consequences are to be apprehended. Their connexion with the blood-royal gives them an influence which must endanger the safety of your son; and you being suspected of having participated in the late revolution, will be certainly singled out as one of the first victims. If they are not to be overcome by open force, the concealed dagger is a sure and speedy remedy against threatened hostility."

These arguments rousing the queen's fears, she

hastened to her son, threw herself at his feet, and implored him to provide for his own and his mother's safety by ordering the instant seizure of the two refractory nobles before they should be aware that their hostile designs had been made known.

Shums-ood-Deen, overcome by the earnest entreaties of his mother, was reluctantly induced to consent to the apprehension of the husbands of his aunts. They, however, having obtained intelligence of his design, quitted Koolburga, and shut themselves up in the fortress of Sagur, where they were for the present secure from the machinations of their enemy.

An officer of the name of Suddoo, formerly a servant of the royal family, commanded in Sagur. He was rich and powerful, and received the princes with the greatest hospitality, doing everything in his power to evince his attachment to them. He was entirely in the interests of the deposed monarch, and felt the strongest antipathy towards the traitor who had mutilated him and assassinated his nobles. He had been elevated by Gheias-ood-Deen to his present dignity as a reward for long and faithful services, and his gratitude did not sleep. Towards Lallcheen he al-

ways entertained a secret enmity, suspecting the integrity of his purposes, and believing him to be nothing better than a hollow hypocrite.

The fortress under Suddoo's command was one of great strength, and in it for the present the princes felt themselves perfectly secure. Here they were determined to remain until they could assemble a sufficient body of forces to oppose the treacherous slave.

In pursuance of this determination, they addressed letters to Shums-ood-Deen and the principal nobility, declaring that they were making preparations to chastise the man who had committed such an act of outrage upon his sovereign, at the same time declaring that they had no intention of disturbing the existing government. They stated that, as near relatives of the deposed monarch, they conceived it their duty to use every effort to inflict justice upon him by whom he had been so irreparably injured, and called upon the nobility and the reigning sovereign to assist them in punishing so grievous an offender. If this were done, they promised entire submission to Shums-ood-Deen's government, and concluded by a solemn asseveration that nothing should deter them from bringing retribution upon the head of Lallcheen.

The king was not disposed to look unfavourably at this communication. The trammels which his benefactor, as the sanguinary slave always called himself, had cast upon him, cramped his youthful and ardent spirit. Nothing but his affection for the daughter made him hesitate upon sacrificing the father. This caused him at first to waver; he thought upon her beauty, her accomplishments, and his passion began to blaze. How would she endure to see her father given up to certain death by the man who professed to love her as his own soul? Would she not spurn him? would she not shrink with loathing from the destroyer of her parent? He reflected upon that parent's baseness, his ambition, his tyranny; but his love for Agha bore down all opposition arising from the contemplation of her father's worthlessness, and he finally determined to protect the man whom by every principle of equity he was bound to sacrifice.

Lallcheen meanwhile was not insensible to what was going on. He was now more than ever anxious that his daughter should be united to the reigning monarch, as he imagined it would tend to confirm his own influence in the state, and put an end at once to those hostile measures which the family of Gheias-ood-Deen were taking to vindicate the wrongs

of their royal relative: it would moreover enable him to command the whole energies of Shums-ood-Deen's kingdom, civil, political and military, which he would have the power of employing to counteract the hostile intentions of his foes. He felt himself, nevertheless, in a state of great embarrassment, and began to entertain such designs as are generally the resort of desperate men. Although conscious of his unpopularity, he had nevertheless secured the favour of the troops by paying up their arrears, and allowing them some privileges which they had never hitherto enjoyed. All the disaffected Omrahs too, of whom there were not a few, tendered him their services, and declared that they would maintain his cause to the last drop of their blood. He, however, was fully aware how little confidence is to be placed either upon the professions or promises of unprincipled men. His own heart was a faithful interpreter of what such promises and professions amounted to, and he therefore felt anything but in a state of security. This rendered him desperate. The opposition of his daughter had so exasperated him against her that he had treated her with a severity which, instead of subduing her resolution, had only the more firmly determined her to thwart his wishes with an indo-

mitable resolution, which he did not imagine she possessed. To all his promises of tenderness towards her, if she would only relax from her stubborn opposition, she replied by a calm look of defiance, that moved him more than once to acts of violence. She shrank not from the arm that struck her to the earth, but rose without a murmur of complaint, and smiled upon the impotent malice that would stifle her conscience under the claims of parental authority.

The situation of the slave was now becoming critical. He sought the queen-mother, and represented to her the danger to which she must necessarily be exposed, should the avengers of her elder son's deposition succeed in gaining possession of the capital. She had never been popular with the Omrahs, and therefore began to fear that her fate would be involved in that of Lalleheen, as it was generally believed that she had been more than privy to the late massacre of the nobles at the slave's house. Imagining her safety inseparable from his, she hastened to her son, and demanded his protection for Lalleheen. "It is evident," she said, "that the pretended avengers of your brother's wrongs seek but the gratification of their own ambition, either in your death or degra-

dation. Our common interests require that we should oppose them."

"Are our means sufficient?"

"You have the confidence of the army and of the chief Omrahs, and the enemy can only hope to seduce under their banners the disaffected, who are as likely to become traitors to their present masters as they were to their former. We have no alternative but a resolute and fierce resistance; let me entreat you, therefore, to return an unqualified defiance to those haughty rebels, who seek to subvert your government."

Shums-ood-Deen being thus prevailed upon by his mother to act with instant decision, returned an answer to Feroze and Ahmud Chan which served only to inflame those princes without bettering his own cause. They, with the assistance of Suddoo, having collected three thousand horse and foot, proceeded towards the capital, calculating with much confidence that other troops would join them on their march. Disappointed, however, in this expectation, they halted for some time on the banks of the river Beema, without receiving any reinforcements. All the chiefs withheld their aid, as if they considered the good cause desperate. This, nevertheless, did not deter the princes from

proceeding with their present means to put into immediate execution their design of vindicating the wrongs of a much-injured sovereign. It was accordingly agreed that they should advance without further delay, with the regal canopy carried over the head of Feroze Chan. Upon this occasion his brother Ahmud was raised to the rank of Ameer-ool-Omrah, Suddoo to that of Meer Nobut, and Meer Feiz Oolla Anjoo to that of Vakeel or minister.

On the arrival of the princes within four coss of the city, Lalleheen marched out to meet them. accompanied by the young king. He had distributed great sums of money among the officers and troops, which had secured their present fidelity. Knowing that the means of his enemies were insufficient to purchase the treachery of his army, he advanced against them with great confidence. His own numerical superiority caused him to look upon victory as certain; and when he considered the raw, undisciplined state of the hostile forces. his confidence grew into arrogance, which eventually did fatal mischief to his cause.

Notwithstanding the disadvantages under which the princes laboured, they did not decline an engagement. They trusted to their good intentions,

and the general enthusiasm of their troops. A severe battle was consequently fought in the vicinity of the town of Merkole; and the brothers being defeated, after an obstinate resistance, fled with their adherents to the fort of Sagur.

The victors were beyond measure elated at the successful issue of this first battle. The power of Lalleheen increased his presumption and that of the queen-mother, which at length rose to such a height that many officers of the court privately offered their services to the defeated princes, whom they advised to lose no time in procuring pardon from Shums-ood-Deen, by offers of immediately returning to their allegiance, and repairing to the capital without loss of time, in order to concert future plans for punishing the traitor and re-establishing the lawful supremacy.

Lallcheen was too much engrossed by the views of his ambition, which rose with his success, to observe that a silent but secret disaffection was working among the nobles and some of the most influential officers of the army. Confidence rendered him haughty, and where he was in the habit of conciliating he began to command.

CHAPTER V.

The disgust which the pampered minion daily excited by his arrogance rendered him shortly so unpopular, that the brothers Feroze and Ahmud Chan resolved to embrace the advice of those Omrahs who had promised to favour their cause. Relying upon their assurances, in the sincerity of which they were confirmed by the growing unpopularity of Lallcheen, they sent Meer Feiz Oolla Anjoo, Syud Kumal-ood-Deen, and other persons of distinction, to the slave and the queen-mother, representing that fear only had occasioned their rebellion, of which they now sincerely repented, and promising, that if the sovereign would send them written assurances of pardon, they would repair to court. The traitor, imagining that if they were once in the capital, he should have the means of disposing of them at pleasure, was elated by these overtures; and repairing forthwith to the king, persuaded him to listen favourably to their supplications. Accordingly letters, containing flattering

assurances of forgiveness, were immediately despatched to the refractory princes.

Since her last positive refusal to espouse the king, Agha had never been once permitted to leave her apartment; but having found means to corrupt the two women to whose custody she was consigned, she quitted her father's house unobserved, and left the city in a covered litter. Knowing that Feroze and Ahmud Chan were at the fort of Sagur, she determined to proceed thither, and cast herself upon their protection. They received her with the greatest respect. Her story deeply interested them. Her generous forbearance in refusing to marry the reigning sovereign because his ascent to the musnud had been stained with blood, exalted her highly in their estimation, and in their overtures to the king they stipulated in her favour for oblivion of the past and assurances of future kind treatment. The father, though exasperated at her escape, thought that the wisest policy would be to dissemble his anger, hoping yet to overcome her repugnance, and to see her queen of the Deccan: she however refused to return to the capital, unless she were guaranteed the protection of some influential person, who could shield her from her father's violence. It was ulti-

mately agreed, that she should dwell with the queen, who offered her an asylum in her palace.

She had some difficulty in concurring with any arrangement that should put her again in the power of him who, though her natural protector, had treated her with savage severity. She feared that under the queen's roof she should not be secure from the oppression of that father towards whom she felt the natural instincts of affection giving way to those harsher feelings which tyranny, even though exercised under the questionable plea of paternal authority, can never fail to excite.

The brothers received Shums-ood-Deen's assurances of pardon with some misgivings, although these were couched in the strongest terms of affectionate welcome. They knew the treacherous heart of the man by whose sinister counsels the sovereign was swayed, and their minds were in a state of vibration between pacification and resistance. The day after the royal communication arrived, the two brothers were sitting upon a terrace consulting whether they should venture to the capital.

"I have no confidence in the king's promises," said Ahmud Chan, "because he is under the control of those to whom treachery is too familiar not to be resorted to, should their interests suggest

such a course. The moment we are within the walls of the capital we shall be in the slave's power, and we have reason to know how little mercy he has for those who wear his fetters. Slaves are proverbially and practically the worst of tyrants."

"But," said Feroze, "we have our security in the dissatisfaction of the nobles, who already look upon him with an eye of jealousy. They can ill bear to see a menial, not only raised above their heads, but affecting to rule them. The troops have been won by his gold, but as his coffers get low their zeal will cool, and the moment the reaction comes he will be in jeopardy."

"But meanwhile we shall be in danger. It is a nice question to decide whether we should throw ourselves upon the sovereign's forgiveness or continue in arms, for there is danger in both."

"The least danger will be the best choice; and I think we shall incur less risk in repairing to the capital than in keeping up our hostility with such insufficient means."

"But we have promised protection to the slave's daughter, against her father's violence?"

"That is guaranteed by the king."

"The promises of monarchs are hollow. They

are too often made for convenience, and broken at pleasure."

While the brothers were debating whether they should disband their troops and accept Shums-ood-Deen's offers of pardon, or remain his declared enemies, a Cashmerian madman passed by. His dress was covered with red paint. A chowry was stuck in his turban, and round his legs were bound whisps of grass. In his hand he flourished a long thin bamboo, at the head of which was fixed an orange. Approaching the princes, he said, "I am come from the Prophet with happy tidings, Feroze Chan. He has deputed me to conduct you to Koolburga, and place you upon the musnud, and I shall do his bidding. You may smile, Feroze Chan; but this will not be the first time a fool has set up a king."

Regarding this as a happy omen, and remembering the prediction of the saint who had fasted forty days, the brothers accompanied by Agha, proceeded immediately to Koolburga, where they were warmly welcomed by the young monarch. Lallcheen received them with a studied civility: from the first moment they met he and the princes were visibly guarded in their conduct, and the slave, with all his subtlety, was unable to win the confidence of either brother.

No sooner had Feroze and Ahmud Chan entered the capital, than they endeavoured to render themselves popular with the citizens, who, it was sufficiently evident, were by no means contented under the existing government. In order to satisfy the rapacity of the troops, Lallcheen had been reduced to the necessity of drawing largely upon the people's pockets, and as his exactions were grievous, their dislike of him was bitter in proportion. The troops, too, finding that his bounty had subsided, relaxed in their fidelity, and murmurs began to be everywhere heard. The slave was roused to a sense of his danger; but seeing he possessed the confidence of the monarch and his mother, he fancied that by sheltering himself behind their influence, he should escape any mischief which might be threatened by the dissatisfied citizens. His daughter, according to the king's stipulation with the princes, had remained in the queen's house, so that she had not been molested by her father, who, in compliance with the royal wish, had forborne to see her. Thinking such forbearance would satisfy the brothers, he was disposed rigidly to adhere to the terms of his contract with them, when they consented to

throw themselves upon the sovereign's mercy, and restore the beautiful Agha to the protection of her friends.

About a fortnight after the arrival of Feroze and Ahmud Chan, the king had a public audience. Feroze entered the durbar, accompanied by twelve silehdars devoted to his interest. These silehdars answered to our knights, and followed the courts of their monarchs mounted on their own horses, and in their train rode one or more attendants. Feroze had previously stationed three hundred faithful followers without the audience-chamber. Not the slightest suspicion was awakened either in the breast of the king or his minister. Shortly after Feroze had arrived, his brother Ahmud entered the court, as had been previously concerted. Upon his arrival, the princes told Lallcheen that some of their relatives were come from their estates in order to pay their respect to the sovereign, and requested that orders might therefore be given to the porters to admit whomsoever he should send for.

The minister, entertaining no idea of mischief, gave the order without hesitation, affecting great urbanity, as if willing to conciliate those whom

he feared, and who, if not propitiated, by at least an appearance of courtesy, might eventually prove dangerous enemies.

Shums-ood-Deen, meanwhile, being occupied with the ceremony of receiving his nobles, paid no attention to the number of strangers who accompanied his relatives. The court on this day was very numerously attended, and the shades of disaffection were seen on many a brow which bent before the throne with the usual expression of homage.

At a signal from Feroze Chan, who took care to occupy Lallcheen's attention by exciting an animated discussion, his brother retired from the audience chamber under pretence of introducing his relations. In a short time he returned; but upon attempting to pass the guards with twelve followers he was stopped, the soldiers refusing to allow him to proceed unless he could give a satisfactory account of himself, and of those by whom he was attended.

The moment was critical, and the danger imminent; but Ahmud resolved to put all to the hazard. Imagining that the plot was discovered, he commanded the guards to stand back: but they instantly interposed themselves between him and the

door. Ordering his followers to draw their swords, and unsheathing his own at the same moment, he buried it in the body of the foremost man who had opposed his entrance. His companions, following so resolute an example, attacked the guards with such spirit that they were soon overpowered, and many slain. Ahmud rushed into the durbar with his sword drawn, and his dress spotted with blood.

The utmost confusion prevailed. A few of the minister's creatures assembled round him, and endeavoured to protect their patron; but all the rest of the assembly fled: they were suffered to escape, as their flight only rendered the capture of the traitor more sure. Pale and trembling, the latter stood in the midst of his attendants imploring mercy; but when he found that it would be denied, he summoned his energies for a last struggle. His followers behaved with great gallantry, and while they were fighting in his defence, a body of soldiers stationed in the courts of the palace rushing in, saved the king and his minister from immediate destruction.

The three hundred adherents of Feroze Chan, hearing the din of battle, quitted their station, and repairing to the spot, attacked and put to flight

the royal guards, together with the dependents of Lallcheen, and in a short time the palace was in possession of the two princes. They were soon joined by many disaffected nobles; and when the issue was known to the citizens, acclamations were everywhere heard, and threats of extermination against the tyrant. It was now clear that Feroze and Ahmud Chan were masters of the capital. When the tumult had subsided, the king and Lallcheen were nowhere to be found; but after a diligent search, being discovered in a subterraneous chamber, they were dragged before the conquerors.

"Traitor!" said Feroze Chan to the now humbled slave, "what punishment do you deserve for your enormities?"

"Such a punishment as a generous conqueror would inflict."

"You have pronounced your own doom."

"Generous souls requite evil with good."

"But there are degrees of guilt which to pardon would be unjust; and where mercy is unjustly bestowed it is a crime. Your punishment shall rest with him who has received the greatest injury at your hands."

Feroze Chan having put chains upon theking and

Lallcheen, confined them in the apartment where they had sought shelter, while he, accompanied by the nobility, repaired to the hall of audience and ascended the throne amid the acclamations of his followers; thus fulfilling the prediction of the Cashmerian madman. He assumed the title of Feroze Shah Roze Afzoon, and, by way of confirming his title, placed upon his thigh the sword of Alla-ood-Deen Hussun Gungoo. Having established his authority without the slightest opposition, he sent for Gheias-ood-Deen from the fort of Sagur. When the unhappy ex-king was brought into the presence of Feroze Chan, the latter said—

"Gheias-ood-Deen, I regret that the laws do not permit a blinded sovereign to reign, or I should have had more joy in placing the sceptre in your hands than in my own. What is there that you would desire to render your life happy?"

"My requests are two—first, that I may be allowed to inflict punishment with my own hands upon the man who blinded me, and next to perform a pilgrimage to Mecca that expiation may be offered for my sins. There I should wish to pass the remainder of my life, which I purpose devoting to God."

"Your wishes are granted," said Feroze, "and I

shall order the treasurer to remit you annually the sum of five thousand golden ashruffies* for your maintenance, as becomes a prince."

Lallcheen was now brought in chains before his late victims. When he saw Gheias-ood-Deen standing with a drawn sword in the midst of the hall of audience, a clammy moisture oozed from every pore of his body, and he felt as if the dews of death had gathered upon his brow. Being brought close to Gheias-ood-Deen, the latter said, "Who stands before me?"

Lallcheen was silent.

"Let me hear thy voice, slave. What punishment does the man deserve who deposes a monarch and murders his nobles?"

The slave was still silent.

"Traitor, I am blind! it was through thee that these eyes were closed in everlasting darkness. The penalty of crime is now demanded. Art thou prepared to perish?"

There was no answer. The ex-king placed his hand upon Lallcheen's shoulder, and raising his sword, brought it with the full force of an arm of vengeance upon the head of the criminal, who fell dead at the avenger's feet.

* The ashruffy varied from thirty to forty shillings.

On the following day Agha solicited an audience of the new monarch.

"King," she said, "I need not tell you that mercy is the brightest jewel in the regal sceptre. It is the axiom of every country where sovereigns reign and people are obedient."

"On whose account, lovely girl, do you seek to propitiate the royal clemency?"

"On that of the deposed monarch, Shums-ood-Deen. I know him to have been innocent of any participation in the late transactions which have cast such ignominy upon the memory of one whom I would willingly have remembered as a good man. Shums-ood-Deen sought not to reign. Had he rejected the throne, his only alternative was to die. We were plighted to each other. I refused to wed him as a king, when I did not consider his elevation just; but I am prepared to link my destiny with his now the bar is removed which disunited us."

"Your wish, lady, shall be fulfilled. He will be released for your sake, with the government of Dowlatabad as a reward for his temperance upon the throne. You shall be the messenger of these tidings."

Agha fell at the king's feet; he raised and dismissed her, with kind assurances of future favour.

She sought the apartment in which Shums-ood-Deen was confined. He was seated on the ground at the extremity fronting the door, and remarked not her entrance. His hand was upon his brow. He seemed to press it, as if it ached from the severe infliction of his own thoughts. The sigh came heavily from his bosom, and he occasionally muttered indistinct sounds, which were evidently the groanings of a lacerated spirit. He did not raise his head as Agha advanced, but appeared unconscious of her presence.

"Shums-ood-Deen!" she said, in a tone of the gentlest tenderness. He started from the ground in a moment.

"Alla Akbur!" he cried, bowing his head; "it is Agha! Is this a visit of reconciliation before I die?"

"I come to release you from your chains. You have imagined that I did not love you. It was a mistake: I loved the man, but as I could not respect the king, I determined not to be the partner of an elevation which my conscience could not justify. Your pardon has been pronounced by the reigning monarch: I have his authority for announcing to you that you will be henceforward governor of Dowlatabad; and, if you still think the

slave's daughter worthy of your choice, she is now prepared to fulfil her pledge."

He threw his arms round her. They repaired to the royal presence, where Shums-ood-Deen's pardon was confirmed, and a proclamation to that effect immediately issued. He swore allegiance to Feroze Shah Bahmuny with much more joy than he had received the sceptre. The details of love and marriage are too ordinary events of life for the pages of history; it therefore only remains for the narrator of these adventures to say, that the beautiful Agha and the youthful Shums-ood-Deen were married forthwith, and repaired to Dowlatabad to a peaceful and happy home.

Historical Summary.

Heg. 854. Bheilole Lody Afghan was the first prince of the fifth dynasty of the kings of Delhi. He succeeded Alla-ood-Deen, who resigned the kingdom to him, and retired to Budaoon, where he died. A. D. 1450.

Heg. 856. The king having defeated several insurgent sheiks, the power of Bheilole Lody was firmly established. 1452.

Heg. 883. Syud Alla-ood-Deen, who had abdicated the throne of Delhi, dying at Budaoon, Hoossein Shah Shurky proceeded thither, and after performing the funeral ceremonies, seized that district from the children of Alla-ood-Deen. From thence marching to Sundhul, he imprisoned Moobarik Chan, governor of that province, and proceeding towards Delhi, crossed the river Jumna, near the Cutcha ghaut. Bheilole Lody was at Surhind when he received intelligence of this invasion, and returning with expedition to his capital, several slight actions ensued; but Hoossein Shah Shurky was finally defeated in a general engagement at Canouge, when his regalia, equipage, and the chief lady of his harem, Beeby 1478.

A. D. Khonza, fell into the victor's hands. After this de-
1478. cisive victory, Bheilole retreated to his capital.

1488. Heg. 894. The king being now old, and infirmities increasing daily upon him, he divided his dominions among his sons, and died at Badowly, in the district of Sukeet, after a prosperous reign of thirty years, eight months, and seven days. He was succeeded by Secunder Chan, son of Zeina, the daughter of a goldsmith, introduced into the royal harem on account of her beauty.

1491. Heg 897. The fort of Agra fell to the king's arms after a short but stubborn siege.

1494. Heg. 900. The King met Hoossein Shah Shurky in the field, and defeated him at a place about eighteen coss or thirty-six miles from Benares. The vanquished chief fled to Patna, and his army was nearly exterminated.

1498. Heg. 904. A conspiracy was formed against the life of Secunder Lody, which being detected, the conspirators, who were powerful Omrahs, were despatched upon different services, and cut off in detail.

1499. Heg. 905. Syud Chan Lody, Tartar Chan Firmully, and Mahomed Shah Lody, being suspected of disaffection, were banished to Guzerat.

1509. Heg. 915. The king being encamped at Dholpore, he ordered Suliman Chan to march to the aid of Hoossein Chan, of Hunwuntgur. Suliman Chan having excused himself by saying that he preferred being about the king's person, the latter became incensed, and forthwith dismissed him from his service, directing him to quit his camp by day-break the following morning, at the same time conferring on him the revenue of Birun for his future maintenance.

Heg. 923. Secunder being taken ill, died of quinsey, and was succeeded by his son Ibrahim. A conspiracy was formed by the Lody chiefs to raise his younger brother to the throne. A. D. 1517.

Heg. 923. The king prepared to defeat the aims of the conspirators, which he finally quelled, and giving full latitude to his vengeance, put many of the Omrahs to death. 1518.

Heg. 925. Babur made his first campaign in India. On this occasion he marched his army as far as the Indus, to where it is called the Neelab; he overran with his troops all the countries in his route, and crossing the river, advanced to Berah in Punjab. In this province he levied contributions upon the inhabitants, instead of allowing his troops to plunder. From Berah he sent to Ibrahim, acquainting him that as the Punjab had been frequently in possession of the house of Timour, it was fit he should relinquish his pretension to it, and thus prevent the war from being carried further into India. 1519.

Heg. 926. Babur made his third irruption into India, attacking the Afghans on his route. 1520.

Heg. 928. Chandahar and the country of Gurmseer fell into Babur's hands. 1522.

Heg. 930. Babur entered Lahore in triumph, having defeated the troops of Ibrahim Lody, and set fire to the Bazaar, a superstitious practice common among the Moguls. Babur remained only four days in Lahore, when he proceeded against Depalpore. The garrison having forced him to risk an assault, he put the whole to the sword. 1524.

Heg. 932. Babur marched for the first time towards Hindostan, being joined by his son Hamayoon 1525.

A. D. from Budukhshan, and Khwaja Kullan from Ghizny.

1525. This year, Babur, with an army of only twelve thousand men, defeated Ibrahim Lody, who brought into the field a hundred thousand horse, and a hundred elephants. This victory secured the empire of India to the House of Timour. Ibrahim Lody was found among the slain. This year the fort of Gualior was besieged by a numerous army of Hindoos. Tartar Chan, the governor, being reduced to great distress, applied to Babur, who marched to his relief, and obliged the enemy to raise the siege.

1525. Heg. 933. The mother of the late king of Delhi, Ibrahim Lody, formed a design to poison Babur, and seduced the taster of the royal kitchen to put some poison into a dish of hare soup. Babur, after tasting a few spoonsful, nauseated the soup, and immediately vomited, which saved his life. The plot was discovered, the taster put to death, Ibrahim Lody's mother cast into prison, and her wealth confiscated.

1526. Heg. 933. The king defeated an army collected by several confederated chieftains, in order to place a son of the late Ibrahim Lody upon the throne of Delhi.

1528. Heg. 935. Babur commenced a tour through his new kingdom. He first took the route to Gualior, and viewed there the fortifications, the stone elephant, and the celebrated palace of Rajah Man Singh. He then visited the gardens of Raheem Dad, and having admired some extremely fine scarlet oleander flowers, ordered a few of the plants to be conveyed to Agra. During his stay at Gualior he went in state to the great Mosque, built by the Emperor Altmish, for

whose soul he ordered prayers to be read, and returned by another route to Agra. A. D.

Heg. 936. In the month Rujab of this year, the king fell sick, and his disorder gaining ground, he sent for his son Prince Humayoon, and appointed him his successor. 1530.

Heg. 937. On Monday the fifth of Jumad-ool-Awul, Babur Padshah died. According to his will his body was transported to Cabul, and interred in a sepulchre at that city. He died at the age of fifty, having reigned thirty-eight years. 1530.

The Siege of Gualior.

The Siege of Gualior.

CHAPTER I.

The fort of Gualior was in a state of siege. Tartar Chan was at this time governor of it; but being beleaguered by the Rajah of that country, to whose family it had formerly belonged, and not in a condition to resist the numerous forces of the Hindoo, Tartar Chan solicited Babur's aid. The detachment of troops sent by the Mogul monarch defeated the Rajah, and obliged him to raise the siege. The governor being now released from his enemies, and repenting of his promise of submission, delayed, under plausible but frivolous pretences, to put the Moguls in possession of the fortress. Their general, therefore, retreated in disgust, with a threat of soon coming in larger force to compel this fulfilment of the conditions upon which his services had been expressly rendered.

The Moguls had no sooner retired than the Rajah returned with his forces and invested Gualior. Tartar Chan was again in a dilemma, but feared making another application to the Mogul Emperor, whom he had lately requited with such signal ingratitude.

Within the fort was one Sheikh Mahomed Ghows, a very learned man, who had a great number of students under him, and was looked upon as an oracle throughout the province. He was consulted in all cases of emergency, being thought to possess the gift of inspiration. In his difficulty, Tartar Chan repaired to the sage, and asked him what was to be done under the present unpromising aspect of his affairs.

"We have not provisions," said he, "for more than a few weeks; and the garrison is already so much reduced that a sally cannot be prudently attempted. What is to be done?"

"You have but a choice of evils; you must propitiate the Mogul."

"But how?"

"Deliver the fortress into his hands."

"Then I may as well capitulate to the enemy."

"No; from the Hindoos you may look for ex-

termination, from the worshippers of the Prophet you may hope to retain your government in fealty to the Emperor."

"No vassal is secure under the domination of despotism."

"What security have you within these walls, surrounded by an implacable enemy whom you acknowledge you are in no condition longer to resist, and who are prepared to exercise against you the severities which conquerors seldom fail to inflict upon the vanquished, whom they happen to hate? You have asked my advice under your present difficulties;—I give it. Make your peace with the Mogul Emperor, perform the conditions upon which he lately granted you assistance against the foe, by giving him possession of this fortress, only stipulating to retain the command of it as his vassal."

Though Tartar Chan did not much relish the advice of the sage, he nevertheless saw that he had no choice between complying and capitulating to the Hindoos. He therefore despatched a messenger, who succeeded in passing through the enemy's lines as a fakeer—for those visionaries pass everywhere unmolested—entreating the Emperor Babur to advance once more to his assist-

ance, and offering him full security for the performance of the conditions upon which he solicited his aid.

About five weeks after the consultation just described, the garrison was reduced to extreme distress. Their provisions were diminished to such an incompetent supply that every person was put upon a stated allowance of four ounces of rice per day. Disease was already beginning the work of destruction, and there appeared no chance of escaping the horrors of famine, except by a speedy capitulation. The cries of lamentation were everywhere heard, but no relief came. The prospect of the besieged was anything but cheering; with starvation on the one hand, and an odious captivity on the other, they had only a choice of miseries, unless aid should be obtained before the expiration of another week.

Tartar Chan did his best to soften the privations of the garrison; but as he could not fabricate grain, he could do little towards hushing the doleful cries of suffering which everywhere met his ears. The besiegers were so vigilant that they cut off all supplies, and were determined to starve their enemies into a surrender.

One evening four horsemen were seen by the

Rajah's scouts, advancing towards Gualior. They were Moguls, and appeared to be sturdy warriors, being well armed and well mounted. They entered a thicket.

"Baba Shirzad," said the chief, "do you ride towards the fort at your best speed, and endeavour to ascertain the strength of the besieging force. We will await your return here, and act according to circumstances. I like an achievement: the greater danger, the more glory."

"I go," said the Mogul; "but to my thinking you are poking your nose into a wasp's nest, and you know how severely those insects sting."

"But we must pluck out their sting, Baba, and then they 'll only be able to buzz."

"But in plucking out the sting we may chance to get a puncture."

"Ha! so much the better; 't will be a spur to renown; so strike your heels into the flanks of your good Arab, and away."

Baba Shirzad did as he was commanded, and was lost in a few seconds amid the gloom of the forest.

"Mir Shah," said the chief to another of his companions, "we must prepare for blows. These idolaters are grown savage at their late defeats

and fight desperately. We must relieve the garrison in spite of Tartar Chan's late subterfuges. He'll be a cunning governor if he outwits his betters a second time."

"Had we not better get into the plain?" asked Mir Shah. "I don't like these strange thickets; they are too favourable for surprises, and my topographical knowledge of this quarter is not considerable. Let us go where we can see our horses' ears, for here we can exercise only one sense, and that the least important of the five."

"Nay, do you mean to make four pass for a unit? You can exercise all your senses in the dark save the faculty of seeing, and, my word for it, blindness is not always an evil. But let us get into the plain if you will, and there await the return of Baba Shirzad."

The Moguls had not long emerged from the wood, when, overcome by the fatigue of their journey, they began to nod on their saddles. They were, however, suddenly roused by a clattering of hoofs, as of a horse at full speed, and presently Baba Shirzad appeared coming towards them at a hard gallop.

"Fly!" said he; "we are pursued by a large detachment of the enemy; they are close at my

heels, and we have not a moment for deliberation."

"Nay," said the chief, "the Mogul is not accustomed to fly; we must stand our ground at all risks."

"But the enemy are at least a hundred and fifty men."

"The more the better; throw them into confusion and they 'll cut one another's throats. 'Tis no easy matter to distinguish friends from foes in the dark, and after a death or two they 'll magnify two brace of warriors into a host. Stand by me like brave men, and I 'll show you some sport worth witnessing."

By this time a considerable detachment of the enemy had advanced to within a hundred yards of the spot where the four horsemen stood. The Moguls had separated, each taking up his position with his back towards the wood, and shouting simultaneously, in order to lead the enemy to suppose they formed a small squadron. The Hindoos reined up their horses, and immediately winged a flight of arrows, calling upon their foes to surrender; this was answered by a discharge of four shafts, which being directed with better aim, and against a large mass, did some execution.

The Hindoo chief was mounted upon a white charger, which was a guide to the Moguls in what direction to shoot their arrows. The four horsemen now uniting galloped towards the enemy, and when within ten yards of them, discharged their barbed reeds, turned and retreated. This they repeated several times, until the enemy, galled by these attacks, spurred forward in pursuit. The Moguls again separated, and plunged into the neighbouring thicket. The Hindoos being thus disunited rode onward in disorder, and frequently mistook one another for foes. Arrows were occasionally shot from the wood, and not knowing whence the mischief came, their confusion increased. In several instances they rode each other down, the enemy meanwhile occasionally shouting to delude them, and then instantly galloping to another position.

This strange fight was continued for some time, until a number of the idolaters being slain, their leader ordered those who were near him to halt, and after a while, with some difficulty he mustered the rest of his detachment, nineteen of whom were killed or missing. The night was too dark to allow of pursuing the Moguls with any reasonable chance of securing them; the Hin-

doos therefore retraced their way slowly back to their camp to prepare their comrades against surprise.

"Well," said the Mogul leader, as the enemy slowly retired, "I told you we should multiply. Night is the best season in the world to enable the few to outdo the many. They 'll have a rare tale to tell when they get to their tents. They have left a few of their companions behind them, whom they 'll find cold enough, and not over fragrant in the morning. But it will not do for four to stand against a hundred by daylight, we must therefore retire towards the advancing forces. Within a week these worshippers of dumb divinities shall quit yonder fortress, or fight for it; and though the dogs are brave enough, yet they have no great skill at warfaring."

"But what say you," asked Dost Nâsir, "to their Rajpoots,—fellows that fight under a saffron robe till their throats are cut, not indeed so much to their own satisfaction as to that of their slayers?"

"Why, I say of their Rajpoots, that they are brave just as a woman is when spirit has turned her brain. She 'll then rave and sputter in spite of stripes; but when her fit of valour subsides, her spirit becomes as puny as a lizard's. I never knew

a really brave man wantonly throw away his life. Excite a coward beyond the boundary-line of his fears, and he foams and snaps like a mad dog; but fury is not valour."

"It may be," replied Dost Nasir; "but a Rajpoot's fury is a nasty thing to come in contact with. And the rascals are so ready in the use of their cimeters that they chop off heads as dexterously as your cooks decollate ortolans for a dainty feeder. I never knew a fight tame where those yellow-robed warriors appeared among the enemy's ranks."

"Well, if there be any among those adorers of chiselled stones now before yonder town, you shall have an opportunity of seeing that such drunken valour will not prevent our forces from obliging them to slink back to their homes, or making a dunghill beneath the walls of Gualior with the flesh of idol-worshippers."

While this conversation was going on, the four Moguls were getting into the heart of the jungle, in order to obviate the pursuit which they apprehended the enemy would commence upon the morrow. Having deviated considerably from the regular travelling route, and being unacquainted with the locality, they got into a pathless forest.

This was a dilemma from which they must use their wits to be delivered, and with this prudent resolution they cast themselves upon the protection of Him to whom the path of the wilderness is as familiar as that of the populous country.

CHAPTER II.

When the Moguls had got into the heart of the forest, beyond the probable reach of pursuit, they halted, picketed their horses in a small grassy glen, and casting themselves beneath the shelter of a leafy tree, threw their saddle-cloths over their shoulders, and soon sank into profound repose. In the morning they rose and pursued their way. The chief was a broad-shouldered man, above the middle height, exceedingly muscular, with a handsome good-humoured countenance, somewhat roughened by constant exposure to various changes of atmosphere. His limbs were so sinewy, that it appeared as if ropes were twisted round his bones, and covered with a skin as firm and flexible as was requisite to compact such bones and muscles. He had a large laughing eye, but so brilliant that, when the round animated features subsided from their wonted joyousness into sudden gravity, it seemed as if its quick intense scrutiny could reach the very depths of the soul. His mouth was small, and

the lips generally a little protruded, giving an arch expression to his features, that made the beholder think they were ever the home of good-humour. His head was somewhat diminutive, or rather it appeared so in consequence of the prodigious size of his neck, which was perfectly Atlantean. It was bare to his shoulders, and showed a capacity of strength almost superhuman. He mounted his horse with a bound as light as that of the grasshopper; and his steed, a noble Persian charger, was evidently proud of its burthen. His companions were fine men, but utterly insignificant by the side of their chief.

As they proceeded, the ground became swampy and anything but agreeable for travelling. They at length reached the banks of a considerable stream, upon which a number of fowlers were exercising the various artifices of their craft. It was an unusual, and therefore an interesting sight to the strangers. The country abounded with water-fowl which were very fat, and there was a good vent for them in the neighbouring villages and at a town some distance down the stream. A large kind of heron congregated here in immense flocks; but the choice bird was the khawasil, a fowl in great request, because it was extremely rare. The

Moguls were interested by the manner of catching these birds, which was as follows:—"The fowler spun a thin sliding springe, about an arrow's flight long, and to the one end of this cord fixed a double-pointed arrow, while on the other end of it he fastened a cross handle of horn. He then took a stick of the thickness of the wrist, and a span in length, and commencing at the arrow, wound up the cord until it was all wound on; after which he made fast the horn handle, and pulled out the stick of the thickness of the wrist, on which the cord had been wound, the cord remaining wound up and hollow. Taking a firm hold of the horn handle, he threw the dart, having the cord attached to it, at any fowl that came near. If it fell on the neck or wings of the bird, it immediately twisted round it and brought it down.

"All the people on the Baran catch birds in this manner, but it is extremely difficult and unpleasant, as it must be practised on dark and rainy nights; for on such nights, for fear of the ravenous animals and beasts of prey, they fly about constantly all night long, never resting till the morning; and at such times they fly low. In dark nights they keep flying over the running water, as it appears bright and white; and

it is at such times, when from fear they fly up and down above the streams all night long, that the fowlers cast their cords." * The chief of the Moguls, struck with the ingenious mode of taking these birds, attempted to cast the snare; but with all his skill in the use of weapons of war, at which he was singularly expert, he could not manage to secure a single bird.

A little further down the river, a singular mode of taking fish excited the travellers' attention. "In a place where the water fell from a height, the fishermen had dug out pits about the size of a house, and laying them with stones in the form of the lower part of a cooking furnace, they had heaped on stones above the pits, leaving only one passage for the water to descend; they had piled up the stones in such a manner that, except by this single passage, there was no other for the fish either to come or go. The water of the stream finding its way through these stones, this contrivance answered the purpose of a fishpool. In winter, whenever fish were required, they opened one of

* See Memoirs of Zehir-ed-Din, Mahommed Babur, Emperor of Hindostan, written by himself in the Jaghatai Turki, and translated partly by the late John Leyden, M.D., partly by William Erskine, Esq., pp. 153-4.

these pits and took out forty or fifty fish at a time. In some convenient place of the pit, an opening was formed, and excepting at that outlet, all the sides of it were secured with rice straw, over which stones were piled up. At the opening was fastened a kind of wicker-work like a net; the two extremities being contracted were brought near each other. In the middle of this first wicker-net was fixed another piece of wicker net-work, in such a way that the mouth of this last might correspond with that of the other, but its whole length be only about half of that of the one first mentioned. The mouth of this inner net-work was made very narrow. Whatever entered, passed of necessity into the larger wicker-net, the lower part of which was so constructed that no fish could escape back. The lower part of the mouth of the inner wicker-net was so formed, that when fish had once entered the upper part, they were forced to proceed one by one down to the lower part of its mouth. The sharpened sticks forming the lower part of the mouth were brought close together: whatever passed this mouth came into the larger wicker-net, the lower passage of which was strongly secured, so that the fish could not escape; for if it happened to turn and attempt to

swim back, it could not get up in consequence of the sharpened prongs that formed the lower mouth of the small inner wicker-net. Every time the fishermen bring their nets, they fasten them on the water-course of the fishpool, and then take off the covering of the fishpool, leaving all its sides secured by the rice straw. Whatever they can lay hold of in the hollow pit they seize, while every fish that attempts to escape by the only issue left, necessarily comes into the wicker-net that has been mentioned, and is taken there." *

The Mogul chief entered familiarly into conversation with the fishermen, who, being from among the lowest caste of Hindoos, had no great scruple at entering into conversation with Mahomedans.

"Have you plenty of game in these jungles?" asked the Mogul.

"Enough of that, but it is no easy matter to come at it; for there are numbers of animals to it, which don't hesitate at laying their armed paws upon intruders."

"But a man ought at any time to be a match for a brute."

"Your brutes, master, are rough subjects to deal with. 'Tis well enough when you can snare and

* Babur's Memoirs, p. 155.

knock their brains out without hazard; but, to my mind, 'tis a madman's venture to stand against a wild beast, when, if you are killed, 'tis an ignoble death, and if you come off best, you get but a sorry reputation for your valour; for valour without discretion is a ragged sort of virtue, and we fishermen pride ourselves upon showing more of the latter than of the former: if one hadn't more discretion than valour, fishing would be but a beggarly craft, and as it is we can't manage to get rich."

"What animals most prevail in these woods?"

"Why there's a tolerable sprinkling of tigers, and hogs in abundance; but the greatest nuisance in these parts is a rhinoceros that often comes upon the banks of the river, and does us terrible damage. I wish some bold champion would make a feast of him for the vultures, and he would render us a very laudable service."

"But do you never make any effort to destroy such a clumsy enemy? Man ought not to allow a beast to get the better of him. Reason should be a more successful weapon than simple animal strength, and he who fails to use his own with advantage against mere instinctive ferocity, is hardly a gradation above the brutes.

"This is all very well when you are out of sight of tigers and those clawed or horned foes, which make no more of dieting upon a horse, or knocking down a buffalo, than I should do of setting my heel upon the head of a little fish; but it is quite a different thing when these inhabitants of the woods walk out of some thicket, and bid you an unexpected good morrow. It is a maxim with us fishermen to keep as much as possible out of the way of all surly quadrupeds; we leave the glory of vanquishing them to wiser heads and abler bodies. We seek no victory over the tenants of the forest, but are satisfied with a conquest over the more gentle occupants of the water."

"Can you say where the rhinoceros you spoke of was last seen?"

"He is said to be generally found near a dell not far from the entrance of the jungle."

"There are two gold mohurs, if you will come and point out the spot." Saying this, the Mogul flung down two golden pieces at the fisherman's feet.

"I am ready," said the man, "even to risk my life for such a boon as this, it is more than a month's fishing would produce; I am your ser-

vant for as long a time as you may need my services to-day; to-morrow I must be again my own master, unless the forest savage should impale me alive, or trample me to death for my good-will in showing you his haunt."

The horsemen proceeded towards the cover, accompanied by the Hindoo, who trotted along by the side of their chief's charger. He was a small but amazingly active man, something past the middle age, and a shrewd, wary person. As they passed through a piece of ground in which the grass was up to their horses' haunches, a hog started from a thick tuft, and scampered over the field with the speed of a stag. Baba Shirzad, who happened to be nearest, strung his bow in a moment, and winging an arrow at the poor beast, buried the shaft in its body. The hog rolled over upon its back, and died after a few violent struggles.

"A good hit, Baba," cried the chief; "that arrow was pulled home, and although lodged under a pig's hide, does no discredit to a soldier's aim. I long to try my reed at a mark, or my arm against a foe. Let your shafts fly as truly against yonder besiegers when we next meet them,

and they will have good cause to repent that they ever pitched their tents before Gualior."

"I shall try my best," said Baba Shirzad, with a smile, that showed he was not a little flattered at the observation of his comrade, who was known never to praise upon slight grounds: "I would fain draw blood from something better worth an arrow's point than a filthy swine."

"Nay, a chine is no bad thing in the jungle, where even berries are sometimes scarce, and when the appetite is at a climax; for though the Koran inhibits pork, yet hunger is a most religious apology for violating the interdiction. The Prophet never intended that a starving man should lick his thumbs for a meal, when hog's flesh was to be had at the expense of a barbed reed. The hog is fat; come, Baba, take a slice or two from its haunches that we may break a too long fast."

Baba Shirzad dismounted; a few fine steaks were cut from the boar's body with the broad blade of his crease, a fire was kindled, and a dish of keibobs speedily prepared. Having despatched this summary meal, in which their guide declined participating, they remounted their steeds, and

proceeding towards the thicket, prepared to attack the rhinoceros should he cross their path.

Upon gaining the skirts of a very close cover, a buffalo was seen bounding over the plain with amazing speed, its head almost between its knees, and its tail in the air, exhibiting tokens of furious animosity.

As the creature approached, the earth flew from its heels like fragments after an explosion. It snorted — its eyes glared — it plunged, and on reaching the horsemen, made a rush towards the foremost with its head nearly bent to the ground, and its back curved like a crescent. The Mogul chief moved his steed actively on one side, and the maddened buffalo passed him in the impetuosity of its career with the speed of a dart. He immediately wheeled round, so did the buffalo, and repeated its charge. The Mogul, raising himself in his stirrups, lifted his heavy Damascus cimeter, turned his horse again as the animal charged, and stooping suddenly, brought upon the horns of the furious beast, his ponderous weapon, which cut sheer through them, and was deeply buried in its neck. The buffalo rolled dead upon the plain. The head was nearly severed from its body. The fisherman looked on with amazement.

"In truth, master," said he, "I think the hide of a rhinoceros would hardly stand against such a stroke. Yours must be a rare arm for hewing down foes. I'd rather be your friend than your enemy. If you could contrive to give the mailed forester such a thump upon a spot where your sword might enter, I wouldn't give a fish's eye for his life."

"I shall see what is to be done if you can only show me the game. There's more in the will than in the stroke. A coward, had he the strength of your war-god, and were armed with Vishnoo's chackra, would not be able to slay a cat that raised its paw against him."

"But what could the valour of Hanuman * avail with a puny arm? The mere will can never accomplish the deed. Courage should be cased in a strong frame, with firm bones and tough sinews, else 'tis like putting gems in tinsel—a precious commodity in a worthless outside."

The carcass of the buffalo was now left to welter on the plain, a feast for crows and vultures, and finally for pismires, which picked its bones

* Hanuman was a huge ape, but a distinguished general in the wars of the Ramayana.

was bare as a scraped radish long before sunset. The horsemen proceeded with all despatch into the thicket, where they hoped to meet with the sullen tyrant of the wood, to whose fierce strength the elephant has often yielded up its life in a clumsy, but desperate conflict.

The growth of the forest, a short distance beyond the skirts, was very thin, having been cleared in some spots, and in others enclosing small savannas formed by the marshy nature of the soil, which was low and in places excessively swampy. They at length gradually ascended into drier ground, where the growth of the underwood was thicker, and the fisherman almost immediately pointed out the spot where the rhinoceros was said to be frequently seen.

"Upon turning yonder angle," said he, "you will enter a small defile, flanked on one side by a rocky barrier, and on the other by a grove of lofty trees. I shall take leave to wish you a happy deliverance should you come upon the brute, which is, to my thinking, likely to afford you grave pastime."

The horsemen rode forward, and on turning the angle pointed out by the fisherman, the rhinoceros appeared, feeding at the further extremity of the

glen. Upon seeing the intruders he raised his head, bent back his ears, and stamped his foot violently against the ground, as if peremptorily prohibiting their advance. Their bows were already strung, and fixing each an arrow in the string, they discharged them simultaneously at the huge beast. Three of the shafts fell blunted from his side as if they had struck against a wall of granite, rebounding to a distance of several yards; but the arrow of the chief, directed with a more vigorous arm and a surer aim, struck the sturdy animal near the right ear and remained fixed.

Infuriated by the pain, the rhinoceros bounded forward with surprising agility, receiving another discharge from the horsemen, only one of which told, striking nearly in the same spot, and augmenting the creature's fury. Mir Shah happened to be nearest, and before he could turn his horse, the exasperated enemy struck it with its horn in the side, raised it in the air, and flung it over its head. In his rapid transit, Mir Shah luckily caught the branch of a tree which hung over the spot, and disengaging his legs from the stirrups, escaped the fate of his favourite charger, which lay dead upon the ground with a hideous gash opened into its body.

The rhinoceros did not pause, but rushed towards the next horse; the terrified creature turned and made off with all speed in spite of the efforts of its rider to restrain it. The steed of Baba Shirzad followed its example, and both dashed through the jungle, quickly unseating their riders, who were swept from their saddles by branches of trees which spread across the narrow and imperfect pathway. The Mogul leader, meanwhile, had dismounted from his charger, and casting the reins upon its neck, the animal dashed in terror through the jungle.

The bold warrior, now left alone in the defile, shot two arrows in quick succession at the fierce beast, which was in full pursuit of his comrades; this unlooked-for assault caused it to turn and advance to the attack of its dismounted antagonist. The Mogul placed himself behind the trunk of a large tree, and the rhinoceros approaching in full career, in the wantonness of its rage struck its horn into the trunk with such force that it remained fixed there for several seconds. The moment was critical. Its eye was gleaming with rage. The Mogul drew the feather of an arrow to his shoulder, and sent the shaft with prodigious strength into the socket of that glaring orb. It

passed with irresistible force into the brain of the ponderous brute, which fell dead with a stifled grunt upon the earth. Having joined his companions, who were a good deal bruised, but not seriously injured by their falls, they soon recovered their horses, skinned the dead enemy, and continued merrily on their way.

CHAPTER III.

Tartar Chan was anxiously expecting a reply to his messenger from the Mogul Emperor. Famine was already raging within the walls of Gualior, and there was yet no prospect of relief. The lamentations of the sufferers were every moment becoming louder and more fearful. The governor was taxed as the cause of all their misery in not having given up the fort to the Mogul general as originally stipulated. From reprehensions they proceeded to threats, and at length Tartar Chan began to fear for his personal safety. In his perplexity he sought Sheikh Mahomed, to ask his advice under circumstances of unusual difficulty.

"We had better die starving," said the sage, "than capitulate to enemies who will visit us with an equally painful death. If we tamely submit to their yoke we shall perish in ignominy; but if we die free within these walls, we can at least expire with honour."

"But disease and famine are raging in different quarters, and the enraged populace threaten my life."

"I will go and appease them. There has been scarcely yet time for an answer to your embassy. I will persuade them to wait with patience another day or two, within which interval I have no doubt an answer will be returned. If favourable, we can have no cause for apprehension; if adverse, it will be then time enough to adopt desperate measures."

Sheikh Mahomed went into the bazaar and harangued the inhabitants. He was revered by them as a prophet, and they listened to his voice as to a revelation from Heaven. They yielded to his entreaties, they hushed their cries, and consented to abide the issue of their governor's message to the Mogul potentate.

That very night the watchword was heard at the gate; the messenger was admitted, and with him a party bearing a supply of provisions. They had evaded the enemy's picket by a secret path unknown to the Hindoos. Twelve camels loaded with rice entered the fort amid the shouts of the starving garrison, and the welcome information came that an army was on its way to relieve them,

and might be expected within twenty-four hours. This intelligence so gladdened the hearts of the despairing inhabitants, that instead of the wailings of despair, shouts of rejoicing were heard from every part of the fortress. The enemy knew not how to account for this sudden change. They had been made acquainted with the sufferings of the besieged, and were every moment expecting that the latter would capitulate without proposing terms, which the Hindoo general had determined to refuse. The conclusion they came to was, that it was a feint to throw them off their guard; but they treated with contempt the idea of a few starving soldiers attempting anything against a numerous army, provided with everything necessary, and commanded by a leader of reputation. They derided therefore the rejoicings of the besieged, and slumbered that night in perfect security.

On that very night, however, at the suggestion of Sheikh Mahomed, Tartar Chan determined upon making a sortie at the head of a chosen body of his bravest soldiers, now elated to the highest pitch of enthusiasm at so near a prospect of relief. Their enemies never for an instant imagined that such a measure would be resorted to, knowing how greatly the garrison was reduced by

famine, and supposing, therefore, that the soldiers could not be in a condition to hazard a personal encounter with a vigorous and numerous body of troops. The night was dark, the wind gusty, which was rather favourable for such an enterprise as Tartar Chan contemplated, since the approach of his detachment to the hostile camp would be less likely to be detected before they should reach their destination. An hour past midnight was the period fixed, when it was imagined the Hindoo army would be the least apprehensive of an attack from a weakened and starving garrison.

The soldiers selected for the enterprise were assembled shortly after midnight, quitted the gates in silence, and marched stealthily towards the camp. As they approached they were hailed by the sentinel, who was instantly shot dead with an arrow. Proceeding noiselessly onward, the hail of a second sentinel was answered in a similar manner. No alarm was yet given. They were within a hundred yards of the enemy's lines, when their approach was observed, and a shout raised. The Hindoo soldiers, starting from their sleep, issued from their tents, many of them unarmed, and others with only a dagger or a short sabre. The besieged rushed forward to the tents

of the besiegers, creating a dreadful panic. They had divided into small bodies, and were known to each other by a long white floating streamer which each wore attached to the left side of his turban, and which there was sufficient light to distinguish.

The Hindoos soon assembled in such numbers that they incommoded each other, and thus the greatest confusion prevailed. They could not perceive their foes, who made a dreadful slaughter among them during the panic by which they were overcome. Seeing not whence the stroke of death came, they frequently mistook one another for enemies, and inflicted mutual destruction. The groans of the dying mingled with the shouts of the assailants in every part of the camp. The carnage was appalling. Several elephants, picketed within the lines, were let loose by the garrison, who pricked them with their spears until they became infuriated, and plunged among the tents, adding to the general consternation. Hundreds of persons were trodden to death by these affrighted creatures, which rushed onward with an impetuosity that nothing could resist. Morning dawned before the work of carnage had ceased, when Tartar Chan and his bold followers, satisfied at their

success, returned to the fortress with the loss of only fifteen men.

On the following day shouts of triumph were heard from the walls of Gualior. A great number of oxen and sheep had been driven into the fort during the struggle of the preceding night, and a large quantity of rice secured. The inhabitants were now as much elated as they had before been depressed. The prospect of speedy relief from the Mogul army, and the present unlooked-for supply of provisions, stilled their murmurs; and the governor's success in his late enterprise reconciled them to his former breach of faith with a generous ally. Those houses in which famine had already begun to deposit her prey, were cleared of their dead, fumigated, and the enlivening hopes produced by such a sudden reverse of fortune, so neutralized the effects of disease, that many who were sick arose from their beds and were restored to comparative health within a few hours.

Tartar Chan already began to repent that he had sought the assistance of the Moguls. Seeing how easily he had made an impression upon the hostile forces, he was disposed to think that by judicious night-attacks he might with his own forces oblige them to raise the siege; but he did

not calculate the difference between an enemy prepared and an enemy off their guard. Another such an enterprise must have failed. Tartar Chan, though a brave, was a vain and stubborn man, full of ambition and without integrity. He could not bear to think of giving up the fortress to his allies, and holding it in fealty under a prince who was not in the habit of allowing his vassals or feudatories the privilege of independence. He had been relieved from present embarrassment, and his pretensions rose in proportion. It was a hard thing to relinquish authority which he had struggled so hard to maintain, or at least to have it abridged by the influence of greater.

There was one difficulty: he knew it to be the prevailing feeling of the garrison, that in case the enemy were obliged to raise the siege by the Mogul army, the fortress should be put into the immediate possession of their general. Babur's government was popular, and he was dreaded by all the neighbouring potentates. His renown as a warrior filled the nations with awe. His alliance was a blessing—his hostility a bane. The governor of Gualior sought Sheikh Mahomed, as usual, in his difficulties.

"Well, Sheikh," said he, "I think we have

been rash in so hastily soliciting aid when we might have accomplished with our own arms what we seek for from those of our allies."

"Then, why have you not done it? You grow presumptuous from temporary good fortune; but, rely upon it, if you do not take heed, the success of a moment will act as a spark upon gunpowder, and produce an explosion that shall spread ruin around you. An act of bad faith can find no excuse; it seldom remains unpunished sooner or later. Take my word for it, that without speedy aid from the Moguls you must fall under the domination of Hindoos, who, towards Mahomedans, are the worst of tyrants."

"But what is life worth if we are obliged to give up all that renders it desirable? I must relinquish my government, and I would rather die than do that."

"You should have come to this conclusion before you despatched a messenger for assistance in your extremity. You are bound by solemn engagements, and it is too late to retract. Besides, your personal advantages should weigh but as a feather against the general interest. The lives of those you govern are dear to them, so are their liberties; and you can have no moral right to put these in

jeopardy; for as sure as to-morrow's sun shall rise, if you attempt to break your faith a second time with those who are coming to your relief, your ruin will be the consequence, and you will perhaps involve many innocent persons in your own destruction. I have spoken boldly. You know that I am not one to fix my opinions rashly; when once fixed therefore, they are not readily diverted. Act the part of a just man, as you did last night that of a brave one, and you may look confidently for your reward; but, I repeat it, a second breach of faith will terminate in your doom."

The governor was exceedingly mortified at the result of this interview. Sheikh Mahomed was too much respected by the garrison to render it safe to treat him with indignity; Tartar Chan therefore quitted his presence with angry feelings which he did not think it prudent to express. He resolved, however, not to be guided by the counsel of the sage, notwithstanding the celebrity he had obtained for his gift of foreknowledge. No man, he argued, is infallible, and the Sheikh may happen to be wrong for once; at least the governor was determined to think so, and to act upon this rash assumption, in spite of consequences.

Having sounded several of his officers, he found

two or three among them who readily concurred in his views, though the majority were decidedly opposed to them. Making therefore his determination known but to those on whose fidelity he thought he could rely, he awaited patiently the advance of the Mogul forces, whom he determined to render subservient to his purposes, and then dismiss without reward. He had an idea that he could obviate any future molestation from the Hindoo arms by calling in the aid of some of his Afghan neighbours, who would render their assistance with much humbler expectations than the Moguls. Under these impressions, and actuated by these sinister resolutions, he assembled his soldiers, and gave his orders how they were to act in concert with the Moguls, so soon as the latter should come to the relief of Gualior. He commanded a body of his bravest men to issue from the gate of the town, and, while the enemy were engaged with his allies, secure all the provisions they could find in the hostile camp. He gave the command of this detachment to a spirited officer, upon whom he could rely, and looked forward with confidence to success.

Sheikh Mahomed was not blind to what was passing in the governor's mind; he knew his craft

and resolved to counteract it. Affecting perfect confidence in Tartar Chan's integrity, the latter was thrown off his guard, and his intentions made sufficiently evident to the sage to justify the plan he intended to pursue. Two days after the late nocturnal encounter with the enemy, the Mogul forces arrived to the relief of Gualior.

There was an evident bustle in the Hindoo camp. The advancing army was led by the chief who had so lately distinguished himself in the jungle by killing a rhinoceros. This feat of prowess had reached the ears of the idolaters, and they were prepared for a desperate conflict. Their forces outnumbered those of their enemies by several thousands, but they were greatly inferior in discipline; they had, however, among them a body of Rajpoots, which gave them confidence, as those troops have always been distinguished by their headlong and indomitable valour. The shouts of exultation from the town and fort were heard with feelings of deep vexation within the hostile lines; but there was no time for the encouragement of petty feelings with so formidable an enemy at their backs.

The Moguls pitched their camp almost in sight of the Hindoo army, and immediately advanced to

the attack. Baba Shîrzad, Mir Shah, and Dost Nasir, had severally commands under their brave chief, who took post in the centre.

Shortly after day-break, the Mahomedans advanced in order of battle. The Hindoos were drawn out to receive them, their line extending to a great length, curving in the form of a crescent, as if to enclose their foes, whom they greatly outnumbered. The Rajpoots were placed in the centre, which was strengthened by the leader of the idolaters with his best troops. The battle commenced with terrible impetuosity on the part of the Moguls, their charge being received by the foe with great steadiness. The Rajpoots bore the brunt of the shock, and the line did not waver. The Mogul leader fought with an energy that astonished his foes. He killed no less than six Rajpoots, to whom he had been opposed hand to hand. Still no sensible impression was made upon the Hindoo line.

The troops under command of Dost Nasir had been thrown into confusion by the severe charge of the enemy's horse, a large and well appointed body. At this moment the horns of the crescent were seen gradually closing to encompass the Mahomedan army. Their leader, perceiving that

the crisis had arrived, dashed his turban from his brow, and shaking his thick black locks over his shoulders, called aloud upon the Prophet, and with the cry of Allah Akbur, charged the centre of the enemy's line with irresistible impetuosity. The shock immediately arrested the advance of the wings. The line wavered—the Rajpoots could not stand against the impetuosity of the charge — they gave way — instant confusion followed. At this moment, a body of Tartar Chan's troops issued from the town, and attacking the foe in their rear, completed the rout; they fled on all sides, and abandoned their camp to the victors. The battle had been short but decisive. Immense quantities of provisions were found in the Hindoo camp, which were removed to the town and fort amid the acclamations of the inhabitants and of the garrison.

Tartar Chan immediately sent a messenger to acknowledge the timely assistance of the Moguls, but said not a word of putting Gualior into their possession.

The morning after the Hindoo general had raised the siege, the Mogul chief sent to Tartar Chan to demand a fulfilment of the conditions upon

which he had repaired to the relief of Gualior. For a day or two, he was amused with frivolous excuses, and then a peremptory refusal was given to resign the town and fort into his possession.

Meanwhile Sheikh Mahomed, disgusted at the governor's baseness, sent a private messenger to the Mogul general to say, that if he would trust himself singly within the fort, he would engage to find means of introducing his troops, and of shortly putting the town and fortress of Gualior into his hands. The Mogul accordingly affected to receive the refusal of Tartar Chan in a friendly manner, leading him to suppose that he was prepared to relinquish his claim; but represented to him that, as the enemy might muster in stronger force and return, it was desirable he should be allowed to bring his troops under the protection of the fortress. He further requested as an especial favour, that he might be permitted to visit the learned Sheikh Mahomed, of whose reputation he had heard so much, in order that he might tender him the homage of his admiration. Both these requests were acceded to without scruple; the governor having no suspicion that mischief could accrue from admitting a single warrior within the

fort, so well guarded by the vigilance of a brave and active garrison.

During the Mogul's visit to the sage, who had provided a liberal entertainment, to which several officers of the garrison were invited, he sent word to the governor from time to time, requesting permission for such and such officers to be admitted also, until at length Tartar Chan desired the commander of the guard to use his own discretion in admitting whom he chose, conceiving himself secure in his fidelity. That officer, being a disciple of the philosopher and privy to the plot, availed himself of this order to permit anybody the Mogul wished to pass in, till at length a considerable body of resolute warriors were within the walls, before the entertainment was ended.* The fort thus fell easily into possession of the Moguls without bloodshed. The governor was summoned before their general.

"Traitor," said the latter, "know that you stand in the presence of Babur Padshah, Emperor of the Moguls. Follow me to the ramparts!"

Having reached the battlements, accompanied by several of his own officers, the Emperor said, "What does your faithlessness deserve?"

* See Brigg's Ferishta, vol. ii. p. 52.

"The pity of a conqueror," replied Tartar Chan. "Princes have a solemn duty to perform in ridding the world of those who deserve not to live. Your doom is sealed."—Saying which, Babur seized the trembling governor by the cummerbund, raised him from the ground as if he had been an infant, and flung him over the battlements.*

* Babur's strength is said to have been prodigious, as a proof of which it is related, that "he used to leap from one pinnacle to another of the pinnated ramparts, used in the East, in his double-soled boots, and that he even frequently took a man under each arm and went leaping along the rampart from one of the pointed pinnacles to another."—*See Memoirs of Babur*, p. 430.

Historical Summary.

Hegira 937. Humayoon succeeded, on the death of his father, to the throne of Delhi. — A.D. 1531.

Heg. 938. He defeated the Afghans at Juanpore. — 1532.

Heg. 940. Humayoon caused a citadel to be built at Delhi, on the banks of the Jumna, to which he gave the name of Deen Puna, the asylum of the faithful, after which he marched towards Sarungpoor, in Malwa. — 1533.

Heg. 941. Bahadur Shah threw himself into Mando, which was invested by the Moguls, who, after a few days, escaladed the walls, and, though the garrison consisted of several thousand men, it fell into their hands. The king also made himself master of the citadel of Champanere. Having caused a number of steel spikes to be made, while the garrison was withdrawn from a part of the fortifications deemed inaccessible, he caused the steel spikes to be fixed in the scarp of the rock, by which means himself and thirty nine officers ascended. The whole garrison was put to the sword, but the governor, who had bravely defended the place, obtained honourable terms. The wealth found here was so great, that Humayoon gave to his officers and soldiers as much gold, silver, and jewels as could be heaped upon their respective shields, proportioning the value to their rank and merit. — 1534.

Heg. 943. The king laid siege to the fort of [illegible], which held out for six months, but was eventually taken by a device of Roomy Chan. He erected stages of a [illegible] height, placed upon rafts, which, being [illegible] — 1536.

tance above the fort, were launched and floated down without resistance. The walls being low, they were easily surmounted, and the place was thus secured.

A.D. 1539 Heg 946. Humayoon being surprised by Sheer Chan on the banks of the Ganges, was obliged to make his escape across the river. On this occasion, it is said that eight thousand Moguls, exclusive of Hindoos, were drowned, among whom was the Prince Mahomed Zuman Mirza. The king owed his life to one Nizam, a water-carrier, who with great difficulty swam beside him across the river, and was among the few who survived the slaughter of that eventful day.

1540. Heg. 947. Humayoon was attacked by Sheer Chan, and sustained another signal defeat. The king was obliged to fly, and, after enduring unheard of miseries, reached Amurkote with a few attendants only.

1542. Heg 949. The Queen Banoo Begum gave birth to Prince Akbar. Humayoon finally took refuge in the capital of Seestan, where he was hospitably received by the governor on the part of Shah Tumasp, King of Persia. Upon Humayoon's flight, Sheer Shah Soor ascended the throne.

1543. Heg. 950. Sheer Shah laid siege to the fort of Rusein. The siege was protracted for many mouths, but, upon the governor capitulating, the garrison were permitted to march out with their arms and property.

1544. Heg. 951. The king marched against the fort of Chittore, which surrendered by capitulation. He then marched towards Kalunjur, one of the strongest forts in Hindostan. During the siege, a shell, thrown against the fort, burst in a battery, close by the king, and igniting a powder magazine which had not been properly secured, Sheer Shah, and a number of gunners, were blown up, together with several

chiefs, who were carried to their tents as dead. The king, though he breathed with great pain, gave orders for the attack to be continued, and, in the evening, news being brought to him that the place had been reduced by his troops, he cried out, "thanks to the Almighty God," and expired. He was succeeded by his younger son, Julal Chan, who assumed the title of Islam Shah, corrupted to Sulim Shah.

Heg. 953 Sulim Shah narrowly escaped death from a daring attempt of Syed Chan. A.D. 1546.

Heg. 955 The king slew an assassin who attempted his life in the mountain of Mankote. 1548.

Heg 957. Khowas Chan, a chief justly renowned for his great abilities in war, having revolted, was assassinated by Taj Chan in order to recommend himself to the king. 1550.

Heg 960. Sulim Shah died of fistula, after a reign of nine years. He was succeeded by his brother-in-law, who put the Prince Feroze to death, and usurped the throne. 1553.

Heg. 961 Mahomed Shah was attacked by a young noble in the audience chamber, and narrowly escaped with his life The daring youth who had assaulted him was cut to pieces by the guards. 1553

Heg. 962. The fortunes of Mahomed Shah began to decline. Khizi Chan, son of Mahomed Shah Poorby, of Bengal, in order to revenge the death of his father, slain in the battle of Kalpy, raised an army, and assuming the title of Bahadur Shah, wrested by force a great part of the eastern provinces out of the hands of Mahomed Shah, whom he eventually defeated and slew. Secunder Shah Soor was elected king. He was this year defeated with great slaughter by Humayoon, who had returned to his dominions with a numerous and well appointed army. This victory decided the fate of the empire; and the kingdom of Delhi fell for ever from the hands of the 1554

Afghans. Humayoon re-entered Delhi in triumph, and became a second time King of Hindostan.

A.D. 1556. Heg. 963. Shah Abool Maaly, on account of disputes with the generals of his army in the Punjab, had given time to Secunder Soor to rally his forces. The king accordingly permitted his son Akbar, under the direction of Beiram Chan, to go against him. One evening as the king was walking on the library terrace at Delhi, in consequence of his staff slipping along the marble pavement, he fell headlong, and was taken up insensible. He was laid upon a bed, and although he recovered his speech, he died four days after about sunset. He was buried in the new city on the banks of the river, and a splendid monument was erected some years after by his son Akbar. Humayoon died at the age of fifty-one, after a reign of twenty-five years, both in Cabul and India. He was a prince of great intrepidity, possessing the virtues of charity and munificence in an eminent degree.

The Pariah.

The Pariah.

CHAPTER I.

One morning a poor Pariah was seated at the door of his miserable hovel in a solitary spot not far from the bank of a river He was in a state of the saddest destitution. Famine had ravaged the district. Thousands of his countrymen had died around him, and he expected every moment a similar doom. His wife was lying with a baby at her breast in a corner of the hut, unable to rise from exhaustion. Food indeed was to be purchased at the neighbouring town, but he had no money, and no one in the bazaar would sell food to a Pariah. He made up his mind to die. For days he tasted nothing but the roots of a few shrubs which grew sparingly upon the river's bank. The whole of that morning he had followed a drove of oxen, and collected their dung in

order to obtain the few grains of gram* which it might chance to contain. Having washed the ordure, after a hard morning's labour he obtained about a handful of grain, which he boiled and gave to his wife. He had himself fasted since the previous day. His wife was a young creature, not yet fifteen, though the mother of three children. He loved her with a fondness as ardent as it was merited, and this fondness was now greatly enhanced by the sad circumstances to which they and their children were likely to become victims.

The unhappy husband gazed upon the waters of the river as they flowed solemnly onward, his mind absorbed in his own intense distress. What is there, he thought, in this world to render life desirable? Is it not one continued scene of privation to the despised Pariah? Is he not an outcast from every human community but that degraded race of which he is a member? May he not be struck dead if he but cross the path of a Brahmin? If the hand of tyranny is raised to strike, dare he lift up his to ward off the stroke? If his shadow pass over the ground upon which the feet of holy men are treading, is it not pronounced accursed, and he doomed to ex-

* Gram is a sort of small bean, [illegible] by cattle in India.

piate the fearful penalty of having cast pollution upon the very earth which now denies him sustenance? And yet death is a terrible event. What becomes of the Pariah when the vultures have secured his body, and his bones are reduced to dust? He has no prospect beyond the grave, which shuts him out from all future hope. He has therefore no motive for preserving life, and yet he has a natural dread of losing it. The certainty, however sad, is preferable to the terrible uncertainty that may issue in something worse The elements of happiness may be found in this world with all its miseries. If I could provide for those around me I should still be comparatively a happy man; I have a wife whom I love, children dear to my heart; could I but give them food, with all this bereavement, I would no longer deplore the condition of a poor Pariah.

These and similar thoughts passed through the mind of the starving Hindoo, as he sat before the door of his hovel, gazing with a vacant expression upon the river. It was here of great breadth and considerable depth. He was at length aroused from his mental absorption, by seeing on the other side a horseman riding at full speed towards the bank. He observed the man's impetuous career, every

moment expecting to see him halt; but no—the stranger urged his steed madly onward and plunged into the river. The current, though not turbulent, was rapid, and he was borne down the stream. His horse encumbered with its load—for, besides the rider, it had a large pack upon its back—soon began to sink under its burthen. The rider perceiving his peril quitted the saddle and began to swim towards the shore; but he was heavily clad, and the current proved too strong for him.

The horse, released from its encumbrance, rose gallantly above the waters, and succeeded in reaching the bank. The man was soon in extreme danger; he could scarcely keep his head above the surface; his struggles were desperate, but it was evident they could not last much longer. His stomach was already filled with water—his eyes were becoming dim—his senses fading fast; he gasped, turned upon his back, and drifted with the stream.

The Pariah, seeing the stranger's peril, started from the ground, and, weak as he was, ran to the bank opposite to the spot where the swimmer was struggling, and, plunging into the river, with much difficulty succeeded in bringing him to land. The stranger lay for some time insensible; but by rubbing

and rolling him upon the ground, the Pariah finally restored him to consciousness. He looked at his benefactor and pronounced a blessing upon him.

"How is it," he cried, "that a Mahomedan beholds in his preserver one of a race who consider personal contact with any one, not of their own caste, a carnal defilement?"

"Pariahs do not think thus. You have been preserved by one whose touch would be pollution to a Hindoo, but which I rejoice to find has been the salvation of a Mahomedan. It is at least some consolation to know that there do exist human creatures who can look upon the outcast without shuddering."

"I see in you the saviour of my life, and that is to me paramount over all the poor considerations of rank. Civil distinctions, when they destroy social obligations, are a bane; I am willing, if he will permit me, to share the hut of the Pariah."

"Stranger, you can only have a starving man's welcome. I am fast going to a better or a worse destiny —a worse I am taught to believe, for death secures no favourable change to the contemned outcast. In yonder hut is my wife with three children dying. Would I could offer you a better asylum."

"Perhaps my salvation may involve yours. I hope to bring you relief. My horse has reached the shore

in safety, and it bears a supply of provisions. Come, let us to your home."

The eyes of his preserver glistened, he touched the ground with his fingers, placed them against his emaciated forehead, and, murmuring a blessing upon the stranger, led the way to his miserable hovel.

Upon entering, the first thing that struck the stranger was the wife of his deliverer stretched upon the ground apparently in the agonies of death; by her side lay two children of the several ages of two and three years, and at her breast was a third attempting to draw that nutriment which the bosom no longer supplied. A tear started into the eye of the husband and father, as he saw his guest's cheek wet with the ready tribute of sympathy.

The horse having reached the bank, had with the common instinct of its nature gone to the Pariah's hut, where it was standing when its master entered. Having taken off the pack, the provisions were produced, which consisted of cold meats, rice, and a few condiments, with some bottles of Persian wine. The rice was spread out in the sun and carefully dried; meanwhile a small quantity of wine was poured down the throats of the youthful mother and her children, after which they were sparingly fed by the anxious husband, who likewise assuaged the

pangs of his own hunger. He and his family rapidly revived after this seasonable administration of relief.

Some hours after the stranger's rescue from the river, several horsemen appeared on the other side; but seeing that the stream was not fordable and too wide to cross with safety they retired. That very night the Pariah's guest complained of restlessness. His sleep was disturbed, his throat parched, his pulse unequal and his skin dry. He lay upon some withered grass in the corner of his preserver's hovel, covered with a shawl which he usually wore round his waist. By the morning he was in a high fever; it augmented rapidly. For several days it increased until he was in a state of delirium; in proportion as he grew worse the starving family got better.

Among the things in the pack, belonging to the stranger, was a small bag containing six thousand rupees in gold. When the provisions were exhausted the Pariah took from this store what was necessary to obtain the requisite nourishment for his family and his guest; this he procured from the neighbouring town, but did not appropriate a rupee beyond what their domestic exigencies demanded. He attended his guest with a tenderness and attention inspired by his natural kindness of heart, and the obligations

which he felt under to him for the salvation of his family from starvation. His wife united her attention to his: they feared for their benefactor's life. They watched by him night and day. His constitution at length overcame the fever, and he rapidly recovered. When his senses returned, he blessed his preservers for their attention. The Pariah placed his bag of money before him and accounted for every pice that had been bestowed. The invalid was several weeks under the humble roof of his preserver before he could proceed on his way.

During his recovery, he had a full opportunity of witnessing the character of his hosts. Both had recovered their natural health. The wife was a small delicate creature, gentle, pretty, with a light graceful figure, and an extremely placid countenance. The man was young and vigorous, short but well knit, and exhibiting a frame capable of great endurance. Their eldest child was a girl scarcely three years old, and beautiful as a cherub. Nothing could exceed the perfect symmetry of its little limbs, and both parents seemed to look with pride upon the budding beauty of their offspring.

"My worthy host," said the stranger one day to the Pariah, who was seated beside him smoking a small portion of tobacco rolled up in a plantain leaf,

"I must shortly leave you. This humble dwelling has been my security, as no one would think of seeking the fugitive in the hovel of a Pariah. You have ministered to me during sickness with a kindness which I never can either forget or repay."

"Nay, our attentions have been more than repaid by preservation from a terrible death, and had not that been the case they would have been sufficiently requited in your high appreciation of them."

"You know not whom you have harboured."

"Nor do I seek to know · it is enough for me that I have saved the life of a fellow-creature. To me it is quite a matter of indifference who or what you may be; you have proved my benefactor and I shall never forget that I am indebted to you, not only for my own life, but for those lives which are far dearer to me than my own."

"To-morrow I must quit you. It may perhaps be some consolation to you to know that you saved the life of the Emperor Humayoon. I have been driven from my throne by a rebel, and I must cast myself under the protection of some foreign power until I can regain it."

The Pariah and his wife prostrated themselves before the Mogul the moment he had proclaimed his regality.

"Rise," said the Emperor, "and receive my benediction: take this ring and this gold, and may it in future keep you from the privations to which you have hitherto been exposed."

Saying this, he took from his finger a ring bearing a large ruby of considerable value, and put it into the hand of his host, together with a bag containing two thousand rupees in gold. This was a fortune to a needy family, a provision for life, which they acknowledged with tears of grateful joy. Being now sufficiently recovered to proceed on his journey, the following morning the Humayoon mounted his horse, and quitted the Pariah's dwelling with prophetic sadness.

CHAPTER II.

From this moment the Pariah's family prospered. With the Emperor's benefaction, he purchased a large quantity of cattle, which he fed with grass from the jungles. By selling these he soon increased his two thousand rupees, and in a few years, by a course of active industry, became a wealthy man. His daughter Yhahil realised, as she grew up, the promise of her babyhood. Her beauty was the theme of every tongue, yet no one sought alliance with the Pariah, and she remained unwedded, which to every Hindoo woman is the sum of human misery. All the members of her own tribe were poor destitute objects, from a union with whom her soul sickened, and she in vain directed her thoughts to becoming the bride of a man of caste. She considered her case deplorable, and began to pine in secret at her unhappy lot.

Her father was grieved to observe her sadness, but could not alleviate it. He perceived that the web of life was a tangled tissue, which never could be perfectly unravelled. The very fortune which had elevated

him above his compeers, had already put forth the buds of misery, that seemed but too likely to blossom and ripen into fruit. It began to be clear to him that a man may be as wretched under the bright sun of prosperity, which may scorch and wither his peace, as under the cloud of bereavement, where oft amid the darkness a faint light glimmers that imparts a momentary joy, the more exquisite in proportion to the briefness of its duration. He had become wealthy, but his riches elevating him above the society of his fellow outcasts, rendered him comparatively a solitary man. They had placed a bar betwixt his child and that blessed boon which is the inheritance of all God's creatures,—the union of hearts in a bond of reciprocal affection. She was excluded from that greatest of immunities to the Hindoo, the privilege of perpetuating her race, unless by an alliance which her proud but sensitive heart could not stoop to embrace.

Many a Pariah had sighed in vain to win the affections of the beautiful Yhahil, but she could not yield to solicitations coming from beings who were but too commonly little above the brute in understanding, and familiar with habits which outraged humanity. Hers was no unnatural pride, but she saw in the members of her own tribe much to pity, and nothing

to love. Fortune had raised her above them, and she could not stoop to an alliance with those who often fed upon the garbage cast to beasts of prey, and had no better home than the perilous retirement of the jungle, where, in common with creatures of rapine and of blood, they shared a precarious abode.

Though the Pariah could bestow upon his daughter a dowry that would have rendered her an eligible object of alliance had she been blessed with the proud distinction of caste, no one out of her own tribe proposed for one of the loveliest specimens of nature's craft that could be exhibited to the admiration of man:—the gentle girl was doomed to pine in utter hopelessness.

A young Pariah had sighed in vain for the love of the beautiful Yhahil. He had sought her notice by every attention, but her averted eye and compressed lip showed that he had no place in the affections he sought to win. He was a well looking youth, with an elevation of mind and a natural refinement of character much above the generality of his race; still he was not beloved. He, nevertheless, laboured with unwearying assiduity to thaw the frost that seemed to have incrusted the heart of her for whom he would have gladly died, had such a sacrifice been demanded of him. Whenever she quitted her home,

he was sure to be in the way with some humble offering of attachment, which she invariably refused with gentleness, though in a manner that showed her sincerity.

"Yhahil," he one day said, "why am I despised?"

"You are not despised, Goutama; not to love a man is not to despise him, and you know that our affections are not in our own keeping."

"But why can you not love me? You cannot desire to live unmarried; and where will you find a husband, if you do not wed a Pariah?"

"It is true, indeed, that I would be married; but I must find a husband whom I can love, otherwise I shall submit to the curse of maidenhood,—for I never could attach myself to a man who had not obtained an entire ascendancy over my heart."

"But where do you think of seeking for such a man, if you reject the whole race to which you and your family belong?"

"If I find not a man of caste, I tell you honestly I shall never marry."

"Alas! Yhahil, you would spurn from you one who venerates the earth you tread upon, for a phantom which you can never possess. Would you marry a Brahmin only because he is a Brahmin?"

"Not without he had won my affections; but,

in truth, the degradation attached to the Pariah excludes him from those affections."

"Would you refuse to wed a Pariah if you loved him?"

"Certainly not, if I loved him, but I never could love him. You, Goutama, would have secured my affection, if it had been possible that it should fix upon one of your tribe, but it is not; I feel my blood curdle at the very name. My repugnance is invincible. We are outcasts, and I would live united by that social bond which would make me a member of a respected community."

"Alas! you are preparing a load of misery for yourself, as well as for one who would gladly endure it, provided he could bear it in conjunction with you. I see nothing but a gloomy prospect before us both. Will you afford me no hope?"

"It were hypocrisy in me to encourage hope, as I never can become your bride; fate has placed an impassable bar betwixt us."

"Nay, not fate, Yhahil, but woman's pride."

"As you will. The bar is nevertheless fixed, and there is no removing it. Seek, Goutama, some worthier object, and leave me to my destiny.'

Yhahil's parents were unhappy at not seeing their

daughter married. She was in her fourteenth year, and still a maiden. She was their only girl, and tenderly beloved by both. The father would have gladly seen her united to a man who could have borne her into society which she could not be considered to contaminate; but, rather than she should not be married at all, he would willingly have consented to her becoming the wife of a Pariah. Among Hindoo women celibacy is the greatest stigma they can undergo; nevertheless the beautiful Yhahil was determined to bear the stigma, since she was precluded from becoming the wife of a husband who could lift up his head among his fellows without exhibiting the brand of pollution upon it.

Goutama, who had aspired to her affections, was an amiable youth, but poor in circumstances, and necessitated to labour in the most degrading vocations, in order to satisfy the demands of nature. His general employment was that of scavenger in a neighbouring village, to collect cow-dung to plaster the floors of the poorer and lower caste of Hindoos, to prepare bodies for the funeral pile, and similar degrading avocations. The lovely girl whose heart he sought to win was repelled from him by the very necessities of his condition, and though she acknowledged him amiable, and occasionally admitted

him to her presence, she could not look upon him without a sickening revulsion of heart. She felt ashamed of her feelings, but was unable to controul them, and her coldness frequently wrung tears of deep distress from the rejected suitor.

Her mother pitied him, and would gladly have consented to her daughter's union with him, had she not perceived the girl's untractable repugnance. Observing this, she could not forbear offering some gentle expostulations.

"Yhahil," said she, one day, "why, my child, do you look so coldly upon poor Goutama? He loves you: is not that enough to endear a man to a woman's heart?"

"No, my mother. We cannot prepare the channel for the current of our own feelings; they will take what course they list. We may controul them, nay, we may master, but cannot change them; they are independent of our will. I cannot love Goutama, and will never wed a Pariah. In this world if there be little happiness, there is, at least, a choice of miseries, and mine shall be those arising from unwedded life, rather than from a union which could never render me happy."

"But why should you seek to elevate yourself above the condition to which you were born?"

"Because it is one of acknowledged disgrace. No mortal was even born degraded, and the stigmas imposed by conventional prejudices I am unwilling to sanction by perpetuating them. I would emerge from the atmosphere of social degradation by which I have been for years surrounded. I feel within me the elements of that nobility which is indigenous in every living soul, the nobility of mind, and have a strong presentiment that I shall elevate myself above the present abasement to which destiny seems to have consigned me."

"Daughter, these are dangerous sentiments to encourage; they will plant thorns in your bosom which you will find it difficult to pluck out."

"If the thorns are there, the roses will grow upon them, and I am content."

"But is it not better to have the humblest flower blossom within your heart, than to find nothing but the bitter root growing there, which puts forth neither flower nor fruit?"

"Those joys, my mother, are the sweetest which have sparkled from a cup impregnated with the bitters of affliction. Enjoyment is enhanced by suffering, and I trust I am only passing through the ordeal of the one, to bring me into the enviable inheritance of the other."

The mother forbore to urge a measure to which she saw her child so decidedly opposed, but her disappointment was severe. She feared that her daughter would never perpetuate her race, and that she was destined to be the parent of a degraded offspring—degraded even among the outcasts of the Hindoo population. The father was no less unhappy, but he did not interfere with the prejudices of a beloved child. In truth, he felt the force of these prejudices, and forbore to divert them. He was a wealthy man, and there was no moral reason why she should not pursue the bent of her own conscience, when it did not lead her into practical dereliction. Yhahil was thus left uncontrolled to follow the impulses of her own feelings.

One morning she was bathing in the river with a female attendant. While standing in the water, draining it from her long flowing hair, a scream from the woman beside her directed her attention to an object which paralysed her with horror. A large alligator was rushing towards her with the velocity of a sunbeam. She shrieked and closed her eyes; in a moment a plunge near her caused her to look up, and she beheld the unhappy Goutama in the creature's jaws. "I have saved thee, Yhahil," he cried faintly, and the monster

immediately plunged with its victim beneath the deep dull waters. The surface was slightly tinged with blood; a few bubbles rose, which were the only indications of what was passing below.

The lovely Pariah made the best of her way to the bank, upon which she fainted. Her woman had witnessed the magnanimity of Goutama. Happening to pass at the moment of the alligator's approach towards its intended victim, he had marked her peril, and, plunging into the stream, preserved her life at the expense of his own.

Yhahil returned to her home in tears. She thought that such a man should have been reserved for better things. She felt she could have loved him had he not been a Pariah, and his melancholy death cast over her spirit a gloom which did not readily subside. The intensity of his passion, proved by the sacrifice of his life, awoke in her bosom the tenderest sympathies. Still there was no disguising from her heart that she could not have married him, even had he escaped destruction, while that moral blight was upon him which rendered him an object of public scorn, and of silent, though undeserved, reproach.

Time sped on, but there was no change. The desolation of sorrow had passed over the outcast's dwelling. His wealth was no blessing. He bowed to

his idols in vain; they heard not his supplications, and his prayer returned to his own bosom. He still pursued his occupation, and money was daily added to his stores, but this did not render him happy. His daughter, the child of his tenderest attachment, was alone in the world, and with all his gold he could not purchase for her the boon she sought.

The death of poor Goutama, whom he respected for his worth, had cast a cloud over his peace. But for his noble sacrifice, the father would have been doomed to mourn the loss of a daughter, of whose virtues he was proud, and of her beauty vain. He presented the family of Goutama with a compensation sufficient to secure them from want for many a year, but this did not restore the son to the bosom of an anxious parent.

One night as Yhahil flung herself upon her couch, she laid her head upon a large snake which was curled upon her pillow. Feeling the cold lubricous surface she suddenly raised herself, when the reptile rose, and, extending its hideous crest, wound itself gently round her neck. She was riveted to the spot; every muscle in her body became rigid, all vital action appeared suspended as she felt the venomous reptile spanning her neck within its horrible coil. She did not move; her breath was arrested,

and her eyes fixed in mute horror, when the snake, gliding down her shoulder, passed round her arm, slid upon the palampore, and made its escape. She was uninjured. It was some time before she recovered her self-possession. Her women were summoned, and the apartment examined, but there was no snake seen.

She lay and mused upon the circumstance. Not being free from the superstition prevalent among her race, the circumstance affected her deeply. Her escape was one of those incidental chances of good fortune which occur once in an age. She had lately twice escaped death in its most terrible form. The gods of her country had surely heard her and her father's prayers, and reserved the degraded Pariah for some future destiny. Her pulse rose with the excitement of her feelings. She could not sleep, but visions, almost palpable to the senses, passed before her. Although awake, she seemed to behold objects with all the accuracy and definite precision of sensible perception.

Towards morning she slept. Her dreams embodied the objects of her waking thoughts. She fancied herself surrounded by the pageantries of a court, and that thousands of her fellow-creatures bowed the knee before her. She was no longer an

outcast—no longer a disgraced mortal, but a distinguished and adored woman. She awoke from the excitement caused by her dream, rose from her unquiet couch, and went forth to hail the rising sun, which marched up to heaven in its splendour as if in mockery of human woe. She looked upon the glorious orb, her heart dilated, and she became a silent worshipper of its glory.

CHAPTER III.

About a coss from the Pariah's dwelling lived a jiggerkhar or liver-eater, who was looked upon as a pythoness throughout the neighbourhood, having the power of foretelling future events.

"One of this class," says Abul Fazil,* "can steal away the liver of another by looks and incantations. Other accounts say, that by looking at a person he deprives him of his senses, and then steals from him something resembling the seed of a pomegranate, which he hides in the calf of his leg. The jiggerkhar throws on the fire the grain, which thereupon spreads to the size of a dish, and he distributes it among his fellows to be eaten, which ceremony concludes the life of the fascinated person. A jiggerkhar is able to communicate his art to another, which he does by teaching him the incantations, and making him eat a bit of the liver-cake. If any one cut open the calf of the magician's leg, extract the grain, and give it to the afflicted person to eat, he

* See Ayeen Ackberry.

immediately recovers. These jiggerkhars are mostly women. It is said, moreover, that they can bring intelligence from a great distance in a short space of time, and, if they are thrown into a river with a stone tied to them, they nevertheless will not sink. In order to deprive any one of this wicked power, they brand his temples and every joint in his body, cram his eyes with salt, suspend him for forty days in a subterraneous cavern, and repeat over him certain incantations. In this state he is called Datchereh.* Although, after having undergone this discipline, he is not able to destroy the liver of any one, yet he retains the power of being able to discover another jiggerkhar, and is used for detecting those disturbers of mankind. They can also cure many diseases, by administering a potion, or by repeating an incantation. Many other marvellous stories are told of these people."

Yhahil had heard many things related of the extraordinary woman already mentioned, though she had never seen her. Impelled by an unconquerable impulse, she determined to visit her. The woman was reputed to possess a singular faculty in tracing human destinies, and was said to have foretold events which had taken place after a considerable interval of time. It was likewise reported, that some of her

practices were of a less innocent character. The death of more than one person had been attributed to her, and yet she was held in such awe that no one dared to molest her. When a violent hurricane ravaged the land, it was declared to be of her producing. When famine spread devastation over the country, it was attributed to the jiggerkhar, and not a serious casualty happened, but the blame was attached to her. She was, therefore, shunned and dreaded by the whole country round.

One day about noon Yhahil sought the abode of this prophetess. It was a deep cavern, near the base of a hill. No human habitation was near. Situated on the north sidë, the beams of the sun were excluded from it. At the entrance were scattered several large fragments of rock, as if casually flung there by some violent convulsion of nature Not a shrub or particle of verdure was visible within at least fifty yards of the cavern. Lizards crawled about the stones, and snakes were occasionally seen to glide for a moment from their rocky retreats, and retire at the sound of human footsteps. The whole place had an aspect of desolation, perfectly concurring with the life and character of the unnatural being who inhabited the cave. For years the place had been trodden by no foot save her

own. Yhahil, with a trembling step, approached the den of the prophetic hag. The old woman was seated on a fragment of rock which lay just in front of her dreary dwelling. On her lap was a Pariah dog, blind with age and disfigured with mange. As the lovely girl approached, the squalid brute raised its head, and commenced a shrill continuous howl, and, when it had finished, began licking its mistress's face with disgusting familiarity. Having finished this canine caress, it resumed its howl in a still louder key.

Yhahil undauntedly approached, but, on a nearer scrutiny, was for an instant repelled at the sight of the object whom she had come to consult upon the events of the future. Never was anything akin to humanity so perfectly hideous. She might have been taken for any age above a hundred years. She seemed almost to have lived from eternity. Her whole aspect was so essentially old, that every mark which in age so frequently conveys an association with youth was entirely obliterated. She appeared the withered consort of old Time, with whom one might have imagined she had travelled through all the cycles of duration. Every feature of her face was frightful. Her hair, matted and grizzled, fell upon her shrivelled shoulders in long thin whisps,

like the dull wiry grass which occasionally hangs from the crest of the sun-scorched rock. Her forehead appeared as if it had been crimped. The wrinkles were so near together, that a needle's point could scarcely have been inserted between them. The skin clung so close to her cheek-bones as to develope the grim anatomy of her visage with a minuteness almost appalling. Nose she had none, but the slight indication of it which remained showed that such a member had once a "local habitation" upon her now revolting countenance. Her eyes were so deeply sunk into her head, and the lids approximated so closely, that the dim lurid orbs were scarcely discernible.

When Yhahil reached the spot where the jiggerkhar was sitting, she flung a gold mohur* into her lap, saying, "I seek a boon, mother."

"Thou shalt have it, maiden," said the hag; "thou knowest how to solicit a boon. Silence Parvati," she said to the dog, which was again beginning to howl, "canst thou not distinguish the voice of a friend—peace, churl. What wouldst thou?"

* The gold mohur is worth about five and thirty shillings. It passes in India for twenty rupees.

"I would know of the future, mother, into which thy dim eye can pierce with the clearness of a star. I stand upon this world as upon a pinnacle in the midst of a blasted wilderness, whence I can behold nothing but sterility beneath, and vague unfathomable distance above."

"Those who would know of the future, child, must buy the knowledge at a heavier cost than a meal of rice."

Yhahil threw another gold mohur in the sybil's lap.

"You are a liberal probationer, and deserve a good reckoning in this life, and a happy change in the better. Follow me, and you shall know more." Saying this she entered the cavern, and the dog limped after her. The entrance was so narrow as to admit only one person at a time. Yhahil followed the old woman undauntedly, but when she stood within the cave her heart sickened. It was so dark that, three yards beyond the entrance, all was involved in impenetrable gloom. The pythoness was no longer visible, but her hoarse cracked voice was audible through the intense darkness of the cell, the rugged sides of which reverberated it with so terrible an echo, that the terrified girl started, sickened, and would have fallen, but drawing

a deep sigh she brushed the gathering dews from her forehead, and in another moment had braced her mind to the necessary pitch of high resolve that defied all future suggestions of terror.

"Now tell me," cried the crone, "what you especially seek to know."

"I am a Pariah, mother."

"That I need not be told, nor how the Pariah became rich. The eye that looks beyond the confines of this world can be no stranger to what passes within them."

"Can you read my thoughts?"

"Aye;—thou wouldst marry a man of caste, but that may not be; yet shalt thou wed."

"Never, I would sooner perish than wed a Pariah."

"That thou wilt not do, and yet marry. Brahma never brought so comely a creature into this world to discredit his creation. Thou wilt be a propagator of beautiful sons and daughters; but I must look more closely to the lines of thy face through the darkness that now surrounds thee, before I can obtain a true sign of thy destiny. I must read the stars too, and that can only be done at night. Come to-morrow by this time, and thou shalt hear more; but let thy sleep be gentle: there is already a fair

augury for thee. Parvati, conduct the Pariah to the light." The dog immediately trotted from the dark extremity of the cavern, and, placing itself just without the entrance, gave a single short bark.

"You are summoned; to-morrow you will hear a more copious record. The volume of futurity is not read in a moment; its page is filled with characters which require the sage's expounding. Come to-morrow, and do not forget your gold. If you would learn the secrets hid in the bosom of time, you must pay the price."

Yhahil was disgusted at the impatient covetousness of the jiggerkhar, but her anxiety had become so predominant that she determined to purchase the promised prediction at whatever cost. She hastened to her home under a new but agreeable excitement. Like all her race, though naturally of a strong mind, she was superstitious. Superstition, in fact, was inseparable from the dogmas of that idolatrous creed in the belief of which she had been reared. Her two singular escapes from death had impressed her mind with a solemn assurance that she was foredoomed to something uncommon. The impression haunted her, and she was impatient for the morrow, to hear her anxious longings confirmed by the oracle of the pythoness. Her father remarked the unusual vivacity of her

manner, and was pleased, as it encouraged a hope that the root of her prejudice was losing its hold in her heart. The mother was no less overjoyed, and the outcast's home was for that evening a scene of joy.

By noon the following day Yhahil was again at the jiggerkhar's dwelling. The crone was seated, as before, with the mangy dog upon her lap, and, as the anxious girl approached, extended her hand, exposing her withered palm. Yhahil placed a mohur upon it, but the long fingers did not close over the gold. The coin remained unclutched, yet the hand continued extended. The hag's countenance darkened, and her eye emitted a fierce lurid glare. Another mohur was placed upon the former. The fingers immediately compressed the two pieces of pure mintage, the old woman's countenance relaxed into a subdued expression of gratified avarice, the dog again licked her face, as if it participated in her satisfaction, and, rising, she said, "Follow me."

Yhahil entered the cave as she had done the preceding day, and remained some minutes without hearing a sound. At length the old woman's voice was heard through the gloom as before.

"The volume of futurity is still clasped. In the broad skies it is written, that I shall read further, and that you shall know further, but not now; come

to-morrow at this time, and you will ascertain what you seek to be informed." The disappointed girl retired from the cavern, deeply mortified; but there was something too terrible in the aspect of the jiggerkhar to render expostulation prudent. She therefore departed without uttering a word.

For several days the same mummery was repeated and the same pretences urged; the same fee was received at every visit. At length the crone, perceiving that the patience of her victim was gradually waning, promised her, with an asseveration of blasphemous solemnity, that on the morrow her doom should be read, upon paying a double fee.

Yhahil had now proceeded too far to retreat, and on the following day she appeared once more at the jiggerkhar's den. The prophetess was seated as usual before the entrance, and received her visiter with a smile, as the latter dropped ten gold mohurs into her filthy hand. She now took from her pocket a snake, and, shaking it by the throat with her finger and thumb, made it hiss violently; then muttering a few words she entered the cave, and desired the anxious Pariah to follow. This the latter did without emotion, having so frequently obeyed the injunction, without witnessing any terrifying result. In fact, her anxiety had now reached to such a painful climax, that she

felt reckless of all consequences, and stood with unshrinking firmness in the presence of one possessing, as she imagined, the awful power of divination.

She had not remained long within the cavern when she heard the snake hiss; the dog uttered a heavy moan, a sudden flash was seen to break through the gloom, and a stream of blue light rose from the floor: the whole space was illuminated. The old woman stood behind the flame, which shone full upon her unearthly form, throwing over it a pale grey, quivering radiance, which added tenfold to the natural hideousness of her aspect. The snake was coiled round her neck; a guana * crawled at her feet, where the dog lay with its head erect, looking into her face. Yhahil blanched not, though every drop of her blood appeared to recede with a sudden gush upon her heart.

"The word of divination comes," said the sybil. "Your destiny has been perused, and it will be as fruitful as you have been liberal. You will not live a maiden, and you will die ennobled. Go to the Mogul capital, and look for the consummation of a

* A huge lizard, frequently upwards of three feet long.

blessed lot, or remain where you are, and perish an outcast. Go,—your doom has been read."

The light now gradually faded, and the place was involved in intense darkness Yhahil quitted the cavern. Absurd and evident as the juggle had been, she was fully impressed with a notion that she had heard the voice of an oracle. Her bosom swelled with joyous anticipations. She seemed to tread on the clouds as she sought her home. For days her spirits were so buoyant that her parents became uneasy: the excitement, however, at length subsided, and she appeared to have become rationally happy. This was an event of real gladness to the delighted father, a feeling also in which the mother fully participated.

CHAPTER IV.

"My father," said Ylhahil, one day, "I have a great desire to visit the Mogul capital."

"Why, my child?"

"Because the Mahomedans have no more antipathy towards Pariahs than they have towards the castes; and among them our wealth would gain us respect, though our social degradation did not."

"Well, I see no objection to the change. As you know, I once saved the Emperor's life, and his liberality upon that occasion was the source of all my present wealth. For a while he was a wanderer in foreign countries; but he has since resumed his throne, and governs his subjects with equity. He might chance to remember and acknowledge the outcast, though princes have not the credit of awakening unwelcome recognitions. We will go: any change will be for the better, and at Delhi the facilities of traffic are great.—We will go."

The wife, who was obedient to her husband in all things, made no objection, and the Pariah family were soon settled in the Mogul capital. In a

populous city, where beauty is sought after and admiration easily won, the personal attractions of Yhahil could not long remain a secret. The beautiful Pariah was continually spoken of, and at length the reputation of her attractions reached beyond the immediate neighbourhood in which her parent had taken up his abode. She seldom quitted the house that there was not a buzz of admiration; and as it was not the custom of her tribe, as of women of caste, to appear seldom abroad, and then always with the face covered, she was seen every day, and the fame of her beauty spread rapidly over the city.

Passing one morning through the bazaar, which was greatly crowded, she was struck down by the pole of a palenkeen. The person within having been immediately made acquainted with the accident from the cries of the crowd, ordered his bearers to stop, and proceeded to the sufferer's assistance. Commanding her to be put into his palenkeen, and having ascertained where she lived, she was carried home, he walking by her side.

The father, surprised at witnessing so unusual a cavalcade approaching his door, rushed out with instinctive apprehension of mischief. Upon seeing his daughter, he began to make heavy lamenta-

tions, until he heard her assurances that she had only been stunned; and quitting the palenkeen she speedily removed his alarm. The stranger was invited to partake of some refreshment, which invitation he did not decline. He was evidently a Mahomedan of rank; and the Pariah was flattered at seeing a man, to whom the multitude bowed in homage, seated at his board, from which all but outcasts had been hitherto excluded. The guest at length retired, after having signified that he should occasionally repeat his visit, which was anxiously pressed by the parents, and seconded by their daughter, not without that silent eloquence of the eyes, which speaks with a sweeter emphasis than the tongue can impart to words.

It was soon ascertained that the gallant Mahomedan was the son of Beiram Chan, prime minister of Humayoon. This adventure naturally led to an intimacy; and young Beiram could not behold the beauty of the Pariah's daughter without feeling his heart moved. He was young and handsome, full of generous impulses, though too apt to be driven by those impulses beyond the strict line of prudence. He was an object of admiration among the chief ladies of the Emperor's court, yet he had not fixed his affections, though they had several times wavered

between two or three Mahomedan beauties. The lovely Yhahil at once decided him. He had seen nothing among his own countrywomen to approach her transcendent loveliness; his resolution therefore was soon fixed to give them all up, and cleave to the charming stranger. This, however, occurred to his sober reflections as likely to involve him in considerable perplexity. It would never do for the son of a Mogul noble to ally himself with the daughter of an outcast, except by those temporary ties which may be ruptured at will; and, even upon any terms, it would not, he knew, receive the approbation of his family. He did not for a moment imagine that Yhahil would refuse the sort of alliance which he meant to propose to her, feeling conscious that he was not indifferent to her, and knowing, as she must do, the impassable barrier to a conjugal union between them. Their eyes had exchanged those glances which are the precursors of a declaration on the one hand, and of acceptation on the other: still he hesitated to avow himself, being unwilling hastily to rouse the indignation of his parent.

Yhahil's father and mother had observed the reciprocations of attachment which had been mutually

manifested by their daughter and the Mogul minister's son, and, knowing the stern severity of virtue which governed all the actions of their beloved child, they looked forward to her ratifying the conquest, which she had evidently made, by becoming the wife of a Mahomedan noble.

"My girl," said her father, as he one day embraced her with anxious tenderness, "I still hope to see my home blessed through you. You have, I trust, won a good man's love."

"Of whom do you speak?" asked the daughter, with a fluttering heart.

"The minister's son."

"He has never avowed his passion."

"But it needs not the tongue's avowal to confirm the evidence of a silent yet more credible expression that he loves thee. You will hear him declare himself before the horns of the next young moon meet. Tell me, Yhahil, do you love him?"

"I do, father.

"Would you wed him?"

"I never could love the man I would not wed, nor wed whom I could not love."

"I am satisfied."

The parents from this time looked anxiously for

the Mahomedan's declaration, but it came not, and they began to be impatient, though it was more than ever evident that he loved their child.

The minister's son paid his visits daily at the Pariah's house, and his attachment to the daughter increased with their acquaintance. He found that she possessed an understanding, though not highly cultivated, yet of a rare order. The degradation in which she had been held in being of no caste, had deprived her of the means of raising her mind to the elevation of which it was capable; she had nevertheless not neglected it. All the means within her reach she had employed, and her natural quickness of perception had given her advantages possessed by few. She had not been allowed to attend the village school in consequence of the disgrace attached to her social station; but she had availed herself of the assistance of a learned Mussulmaun who dwelt at some short distance from her father's abode, and he had given her an insight into the history and literature of her country, and what he could not teach her own readiness of apprehension supplied.

At this period, education was cultivated by the Hindoos in every village, by a national edict; knowledge was universally inculcated, and it was then as

rare to find a poor villager who could not read as it is now to find one who can. In fact, the whole social system seems to have undergone a complete revolution. During those ages when Europe was enveloped in intellectual darkness that exposed her to the contempt of the very countries which are now drawing from the stores of her wisdom and science a harvest which bids fair to ripen into universal civilisation, Hindostan was distinguished by a race of philosophers, who, but for the conquest to which that country has been subjected, and the degrading dominion under which its vast population has so long groaned, would probably have raised it to an elevation in intellectual and social dignity, not inferior to ancient Greece at the brightest period of her glory.* "Education has always, from the earliest period of their history, been an object of public care and public interest to the Hindoo government on the peninsula of India. Every well-regulated village under those governments had a public school and a public schoolmaster. The system of instruction in them was that which, in consequence of its efficiency, simplicity and cheapness, was a few years ago introduced from Madras into England, and from England into the rest of

* See Oriental Annual, vol. 3, page 30.

Europe. Every Hindoo parent looked upon the education of his child as a solemn duty which he owed to his god and to his country, and placed him under the schoolmaster of his village as soon as he had attained his fifth year. The ceremony of introducing him for the first time to the schoolmaster and his scholars was publicly recorded, and was attended with all the solemnity of a religious observance; a prayer being publicly offered up on the occasion to the figure of Genesa, the Hindoo God of Wisdom, which was at the head of every Hindoo school, imploring him to aid the child in his endeavours to learn and become wise*."

Yhahil had imbibed, as deeply as the son of Beiram, the impressions of love.

"Yhahil," said the Mahomedan one day, when they were seated in a veranda that overlooked a garden at the back of the house, "do you think you could be happy to quit your parents?"

"No; I see no circumstance that should render it necessary for me to quit them."

"Surely you are not serious?"

* Extract of a letter of Sir Alexander Johnston to Mr. C. Grant, upon the Hindoo national education.

"In truth I am. Why should I leave them under any temporal change that you can imagine?"

"Suppose you should be married?"

"They could still be with me."

"But your husband might not like them."

"Then he could not like me. They who love truly, feel kindly towards those who are dear to the objects of their love. If not, their hearts are hollow."

"But there are other unions which would render it impossible for your parents to live with you."

"What may those unions be? I know of none."

"Suppose you were living with the object of your affection in an alliance of fervent attachment without being bound by the compulsory obligations of marriage."

"I could never be in such a position, therefore your argument is of no weight."

"Is there no man, Yhahil, with whom you would consent to pass your life, free from those civil restraints which so frequently chill the warm glow of hearts, and render wedlock a condition of dull monotonous dissatisfaction?"

"That may be, but with all its evils, these, when weighed against the good, are lightest in the balance, and I would rather be a Pariah's wife than an Omrah's harlot."

"I thought you had determined never to wed a Pariah—your father has told me as much."

"And he told you truly—it will therefore follow that I am determined never to become the harlot of an Omrah."

"Yhahil," said the minister's son, "I need scarcely say that I love you; but you will hardly imagine with what fervour, and let me ask you to state candidly if that love is reciprocated?"

"Omrah, I am a girl unhackneyed in the ways of the world, and know little of the artifices of life. I am not aware, therefore, that any motive can exist why I should not readily confess to you that my heart has received a strong impression from your delicate attentions to me; but let me assure you at once, for I have a disquieting suspicion, that, the moment they cease to be delicate, my respect for you will likewise cease, and a woman's love without her respect is a jewel in so bad a setting as only to disgrace the wearer."

"Yhahil, you cannot imagine that I can fail to respect one who has so entirely engrossed my affections. I love you with an earnestness which death only can subdue; but you know there are certain social impediments"——he hesitated. The blood mantled to the beautiful Pariah's brow——

"Proceed," she said, "why do you hesitate? Let me hear what you propose: there should be no disguise after the mutual confessions which have passed between us."

"I am sure, Yhahil, you cannot be unreasonable. Where there is a sincere interchange of attachment there should be no suspicion. I need not point out to one of your superior mind that the mere circumstance of your being a Pariah precludes the possibility of my making you my wife. If I did so I should be despised by my countrymen, and you would be an object of scorn among their wives and daughters. I would not for an empire expose you to the chance of such indignity. Nevertheless, there is no social bar to a union of hearts apart from those civil ties by which it is recognised by the world. We may still be united, we may still be dear to each other, and reciprocate affections which no time shall subdue, no contingencies stifle. My proposal is, that you be mine in spite of the civil impediments which interpose between us and a conjugal alliance."

Yhahil had listened in silence; every drop of blood had receded from her face, and left her lips pale as ashes. They quivered with indignant emotion, but she answered with deliberate and solemn calmness,

"Omrah, you may be privileged by your rank to insult a Pariah, but your dignity as a man ought to have withheld you from insulting a woman. What has there been in my conduct, since our acquaintance, to lead you to imagine that I could violate the purity of my womanhood in favour of a man who evidently does not know how to appreciate a woman's virtue? Though considered an outcast by my countrymen, I am, nevertheless, not destitute. I have a home in which there is no deficiency of comfort, and the means of this world's enjoyments are abundantly within my reach. Why then should you imagine that I am prepared to sacrifice my honour to the base passions of a Mahomedan noble? I despise your love—I reject your alliance; from this moment we are strangers to each other."

She waited not her lover's reply, but retired from the veranda.

Her parents were surprised at observing the change which had passed over the beautiful countenance of their daughter. She appeared dejected: the bright smile had ceased to play upon her sunny face, and her cheek was pale. The minister's son paid his usual visit, but Yhahil refused to see him. She disclosed to her father the cause of her coldness; he approved of her resolution, and the handsome Maho-

medan was forbidden the house. He frequently attempted to obtain admission, but was always refused. He sent billets,—they were returned unopened. The force of his passion rose in proportion as it met with resistance, and he resolved to see the object who had excited within his bosom such intense emotion. He appealed to the father, but found him inexorable; the mother was a cipher, and refused to interfere. He became impetuous; this only provoked a more determined opposition. Yhahil would not see him, and interdicted his messengers from being admitted to her presence.

The disappointed lover ceased not to encourage his passion, though it was no longer requited. He became more than ever anxious to possess the object of his attachment upon any terms, even at the hazard of incurring the general odium of his countrymen

Yhahil used frequently to walk in the suburbs of the town, accompanied by a single female attendant. The restraints imposed generally upon Hindoo women had no influence upon her. She appeared abroad daily without reluctance. She had not seen the minister's son since her rejection of him, though her wanderings were never restricted. The mortification occasioned by his proposal had bowed her proud spirit, and she was determined to treat him with

repelling scorn, should he ever cross her path. For the present she was spared this exercise of her indignation.

One morning she went out as usual, but did not return at her accustomed hour. After a while her parents became uneasy. Evening drew on and neither their daughter nor her attendant appeared. Night advanced, and her place at the family meal was unoccupied. Their distress was excessive. The next day passed, and she did not return. A dark suspicion crossed the parent's mind that she had fallen into the Mahomedan's hands, and that he had forcibly removed her from her home.

"There is but one way of frustrating the evil designs of that man," said the father to his sorrowing consort. "I will throw myself upon the Emperor's justice, and beseech him to enforce the restoration of my child. He is a mild and merciful prince, whose clemency is only excelled by his justice. He will remember that I once saved his life, and force the son of his minister to restore my daughter."

"Alas!" said the mother, "princes are apt to think too lightly of the moral delinquencies of their nobles to imagine there is much enormity in taking away the daughter of an outcast."

"I have better hopes of the man who has been taught in the school of adversity the difficult lesson of virtue. Cast from his throne to wander for several years among strangers, he has personally known what it is to suffer privation. Since his restoration to sovereignty he has exercised the best virtues of a king. Why then should I distrust the equity of a man whom I have known by experience to be generous, and whom all acknowledge to be just?"

"But how will you obtain an audience?"

"I will cast myself at his feet, at the next durbar, and implore the royal interference to obtain the restoration of my child. It is not much to ask from one who, though he has cancelled one bond of obligation, may still do a supernumerary kindness to the man who risked a valueless life to save that which has been a blessing to his people."

The unhappy father determined to throw himself upon the kindness of the Mogul monarch on the very next day of audience, and, having come to this resolution, his hopes of again beholding his daughter immediately began to revive.

CHAPTER V.

On the next day of public audience the bereaved parent repaired to the Dewan Aum, or Hall of Public Audience. When he entered he was dazzled by the extraordinary splendour of the scene. The musnud upon which the emperor sat was so costly a work as to be one of the marvels of the age. It was in the form of a peacock with the tail outspread, entirely composed of diamonds and other precious stones. It was valued at seven crore of rupees *. The apartment was built entirely of white marble, and richly ornamented with representations of various flowers. Over the arches which supported the roof was the following inscription in Persian characters, beautifully inlaid with silver on a ground of dark, but brilliantly polished, marble—"If there be a heaven upon earth, it is here, it is here, it is here." The letters were admirably formed, and distinctly legible from the floor. In this hall, beside the throne, was an immense block of crystal, upon

* About seven millions sterling

which the Emperor used to sit when he held private audience with his ministers. It was sufficiently broad to have formed a table. The apartment was lighted by a dome, the largest in the palace, richly inlaid with gold.

When the Pariah entered, the hall was nearly filled. As he attempted to approach the royal presence, he was stopped by one of the guards.

"Whom do you seek here?" asked the soldier.

"Your sovereign."

"He does not hold conference with strangers, especially upon days of state ceremony."

"Your king is reported wise, and not only wise, but just. I come to offer an appeal to his royal justice; and you do both him and me wrong by defrauding him of the opportunity of exercising his justice, and me of receiving that benefit from it which, if report do not belie him, he would be delighted to confer."

"Are you not a Pariah?"

"What then? Are the natural rights of man less my nature's privilege than another's? Mahomedans do not despise Pariahs, and your sovereign least of any."

"You cannot have audience here."

"Why?"

"Because this place is appropriated to the cere-

monies and business of state. You must send a petition."

"Nay, soldier, I must see your king: withhold me at your peril."

"Advance but a single step further, and I shall cut you down."

"My blood, then, be upon your head."

The Pariah stepped forward; the soldier did his best to put his threat into execution, but his intended victim had sprung beyond the reach of the stroke.

"Justice!" he cried, in a loud shrill voice, that rang through the hall; "justice from the Emperor of the Moguls."

"Who is it that demands justice?" asked Humayoon, with mild dignity; "let him approach."

The stranger immediately advanced, and prostrated himself before the king.

"Rise!" said the Emperor, "and state your cause of grievance, if you have any."

The petitioner rose, and was instantly recognised by the Sovereign.

"Vuluvir!" he cried—"do I behold him to whom I am indebted above all men in my dominions?"

The Emperor descended from the musnud, raised the Pariah and embraced him, to the surprise of his court.

"Nobles," said he, "to this outcast from his own community I owe my life. When pursued by the emissaries of him who had usurped my throne, I cast myself into a river, and was nearly drowned. This generous benefactor, although then grievously prostrated by famine, plunged into the stream, and, as I was sinking, dragged me to the bank. In his dwelling I found an asylum. He watched by my lowly couch while the paroxysms of fever were upon me, moistened my parched lips, wiped from my forehead the dews of agony, and restored me to life. My debt to him is such as my empire could not repay."

"Nay, mighty king," cried Vulnvir, while the big tear rolled slowly down his cheek, "that deed of common charity was abundantly requited. The two thousand rupees with which your gracious liberality honoured me, were the foundation of my present affluence. Upon them I have erected a fortune which might place me in that respect upon a level with nobility; but I am still a miserable man."

"State your cause of grievance," said the Emperor, leading him to the block of crystal, upon which he desired him to be seated. Humayoon having taken his place upon the musnud, Vulnvir said,

touching the floor with his fingers and putting them to his forehead—

"Sovereign of the Moguls, I have a daughter, the child whom you once fondled in your royal arms, and who has since often expressed her pride in having received those caresses. That daughter I may say, without a parent's vanity, is a creature endowed with the highest perfections of woman. She is the joy of my heart, and her loss would be a bane which I feel I could not survive. She has been stolen from me."

"I remember thy daughter well, Vuluvir; she promised to be all thou sayest. But who has robbed thee of her?—say, and to the farthest limits of my dominions he shall be sought and visited with the chastisement he deserves."

"I attribute her abduction to the son of your minister."

"Son of Beiram, stand forth," said the Emperor, solemnly; "what have you to answer to this charge?"

The young Omrah was silent.

"What construction am I to put upon your silence?" asked Humayoon, sternly.

"I plead guilty to the charge: I am at the Emperor's mercy."

"Vuluvir," said Humayoon, turning to his former host, "your wrong shall be redressed, and your daughter restored."

The offender was immediately committed to the custody of an officer; and that very night Yhahil was delivered to the arms of her anxious parents.

The next day, Vuluvir was summoned to the imperial presence. "My friend," said the Sovereign, "I know that the religion you profess is one from which you derive little consolation, and to which none of your tribe are bound by very strong attachments. It is my intention to ennoble you, provided you consent to become one of the faithful; and in your conversion I shall look for that of your family." After a conference of some length, the Pariah embraced the Emperor's proposal, and the next day was raised to the rank of Omrah, with a sum from the treasury sufficient to support that dignity. His wife and Yhahil became, likewise, converts to the new faith. The idea of being now naturalised among a people who welcomed her and her parents as their common kindred, poured a flood of joy upon Yhahil's heart. She felt no longer degraded, and began to soften in her indignation towards the man who forced her from her home. He had, how-

ever, committed no violence. She had been carried to a house engaged for the purpose of securing her, but, when there, the noble only pressed his suit without offering the slightest offence to her purity. She repelled his advances with unqualified indignation, he treated her, nevertheless, with uniform respect. The recollection of this disarmed her anger, and she besought her father to solicit his release.

"My daughter," said he, embracing her, "you have always found me ready to meet every wish of your heart, but in the present instance I have secret misgivings which deter me from compliance. To come at once to the point, I fear the violence of that young noble."

Yhalil smiled.—"His violence, my father, was not shown when I was in his power, and I can forgive his rashness in his forbearance."

"But, surely, the man who would forcibly tear a daughter from her parent's roof is to be feared."

"I do believe—nay I am sure, that he loves me; and though he sought to win me to a dishonourable intercourse while I was a Pariah, I think he might no longer hesitate to wed me as an Omrah's daughter I love him, father. He must be liberated for my sake. If we should ever meet in future, it will be

as honourable lovers, or as strangers, but I must no longer be the cause of his captivity."

"I will seek the Emperor and make known your wishes, but——"

"My father, listen to me my mortal destiny has been traced Before I quitted our dwelling in the land of my birth, I sought the abode of the jigger-khar. Her revelations have been marvellously fulfilled—the consummation only remains She promised me wedded happiness, and I feel I shall enjoy it."

"Enough, my child, your desire shall be instantly accomplished," and the converted outcast was admitted without delay to the presence of Humayoon.

"Well, Mahomed Chan,"—the name which had been bestowed upon the newly-made Omrah,—asked the Monarch, "what seek you?"

"The release of your minister's son It is at my child's solicitation that I venture to ask this favour."

"He shall never have his liberty until he makes your daughter full reparation for the insult he has offered her. It is necessary that the noble should suffer punishment for his violations of the law, else

with what justice can we punish the humbler delinquent?"

"My daughter has forgiven him: he offered her no personal disrespect, save in forcing her from her home"

"One of the greatest infractions of public decorum," cried the Sovereign, hastily; "and a most reprehensible trespass upon the sanctity of private life. His liberty shall be conditional. He has violated the obligations of honour as well as the laws of his country; he must therefore pay the penalty."

Humayoon ordered the offender to be brought before him, and, after upbraiding him with having committed a scandalous offence, asked him if he was ready to repair the wrong he had done to the lovely Yhahil.

"If marrying her will be considered a sufficient reparation of the injury, I have unadvisedly inflicted, I am prepared to offer that reparation on the instant."

"I know not," said Mahomed Chan, "that my child may be willing to accept the man who has offered her so serious an insult; but if you will accompany me to my home you can urge your suit."

"Upon condition that he becomes the husband of her whom he has so grossly offended I grant him his liberty," said the Emperor; "otherwise his captivity will be for life."

The father returned to his home with the minister's son, whom he presented to Yhahil. She received him with withering coldness. He flung himself at her feet.

"I acknowledge my fault," he cried, passionately. "I have wronged you—grievously wronged the object of my soul's adoration, and come to repair the wrong I have done by making her the partner of my life. I feel she would ennoble a diadem. Will you become mine?"

"Can you think I have reason to trust you?"

"Yes—you know that passion impelled me to act as I did; love was at the bottom of it, and if you have a woman's heart you will forgive me."

Yhahil smiled; the young Omrah rose, and clasped her to his bosom.—"You are mine for ever; this day shall consummate our union. I shall receive my freedom from the Sovereign only to cast over my heart the golden fetters of bliss."

Yhahil yielded to his embrace; there was joy in the late house of mourning. On that very day the lovers were married. The Mogul emperor honoured

their union with his presence, and ratified it with his blessing. The jiggerkhar's prophecy was accomplished, and never was there a happier union than that formed between the Pariah's daughter and the Minister's son.

Historical Summary.

Hegira 964. The young king fought a desperate battle at Paniput against Hamoo, vizier of Mahomed Shah Adily, who now claimed the throne. During the action, fifteen hundred elephants fell into the hands of Akbar, who, marching from Paniput, reached Delhi without opposition. Mankote was delivered up to the king after a siege of six months. — A.D. 1556

Heg. 965. A reconciliation took place between Akbar and Beiram Chan, which was cemented by the latter marrying Sulima Sultana Begum, niece of the late Humayoon, which took place with consent of the king, who was present at the nuptials. Shortly afterwards the breach was renewed between the king and the regent. — 1558.

Heg. 966. Beiram Chan assembled troops, in order to establish himself in the Punjab. Upon Akbar despatching a messenger to him, Beiram sent the ensigns of state, his elephants, banners and drums to the king, and declared his intention of proceeding to Mecca. — 1558.

Heg. 967. Beiram Chan having proceeded as far as Bhickanere, repented of his resolution to relinquish public life, returned to Nagoor, and began to levy troops. The king sent against him Moolla Peer Mahomed, who had lately returned from exile, to which he had been sent by the regent. — 1559.

Heg. 968. The ex-minister being reduced to the greatest distress, resolved to throw himself upon the king's mercy. Akbar accepted his submission. On entering the — 1560.

court, Byram hung his turban round his neck, and advancing rapidly, threw himself at the foot of the throne. Akbar, stretching out his hand, desired him to rise, and placed him in his former station at the head of his nobles.

A.D. 1561. Heg. 969. One day, while hunting in the vicinity of Nurwar, a royal tiger crossed the road. The king urged his horse forward, and with a single sabre-stroke stretched it dead upon the plain. The nobles present, in the excess of their joy, rushed to kiss the royal stirrup, and offered thanks to God for his preservation.

1562. Heg. 970. Sulim Shah having taken a number of Ghoorkas prisoners in war, ordered a prison at Gualior, wherein they were confined, to be blown up with gunpowder. Upon this occasion Kumal Ghoorka had the good fortune to escape, being only thrown to some distance, without receiving any considerable injury.

1563. Heg. 971. Akbar returning from Nurwar towards his capital, fell in with a herd of wild elephants. He ordered his cavalry to surround and drive them into a kedda, or fold, which was effected with some difficulty. One of the male elephants, finding itself confined, broke through the palisades. Three trained elephants were despatched to secure it, and, before it was overpowered, it afforded the king much sport.

1564. Heg. 972. Akbar quelled a formidable conspiracy of Usbeck chiefs.

1565. Heg. 973. Juanpoor was captured by Akbar's armies.

1566. Heg. 974. The Usbeck chiefs again rebelled, and were subdued.

1567. Heg. 975. This year was distinguished by the siege of Chittore, in which were eight thousand Rajpoots, with an ample supply of provisions. The king having invested the fort,

employed five thousand workmen of different descriptions to conduct the siege. The approaches were made by *sabat*, a description of defence peculiar to India. The besiegers are protected by stuffed gabions, covered with leather, behind which they continue their approaches until they arrive near the walls of the place to be attacked. The governor appearing on the walls was shot with a matchlock by the king. The Rajpoots immediately performed the Johur, putting their wives and children to death. The fort was stormed by the Moguls, who obtained possession of it without further resistance.

A.D.

Heg. 976. Akbar obtained possession of Runtunbhore. 1568.

Heg. 977. The favourite sultana gave birth to Prince Selim, who afterwards reigned under the name of Jehangire. 1569.

Heg. 978. Prince Morad was born. 1570.

Heg. 980. Akbar defeated Ibrahim Hoossein Mirza, and laid siege to Surat, which surrendered, and the king returned to Agra. 1572.

Heg. 983. The Afghans were defeated by the king's troops, and their general was taken prisoner. He was put to death by the Mogul leader, and his son, who had been severely wounded in the action, died a few days after. The Mogul general took possession of all Bengal, and sent the elephants and other spoils to the king. 1575.

Heg. 984. Akbar went this year to Ajmere, and employed Shahbaz Chan Kumbo against Koombulmere, a strong fortress, in possession of the Rana of Oodipore, which was eventually taken. 1576.

Heg. 986. Died Hoossein Koolly Chan Toorkoman, governor of Bengal. 1578.

Heg. 987. A great fire happened in the Furash Khana, at Futtepore, which consumed many tents, lined with velvet and brocade of great value. 1579.

A.D. 1581. Heg. 989. The king's brother, Mahomed Hukeem Mirza, invested Lahore.

1583. Heg 991. The king was taken dangerously ill, and the people became apprehensive of his death; but he recovered, and bestowed large sums in charity.

1584. Heg. 992. Mirza Khan was defeated by Akbar's troops in a sanguinary battle.

1585. Heg. 993. Prince Selim, who afterwards ascended the throne under the title of Jehangire, married the daughter of Rajah Bhugwandas.

1587. Heg. 995. This year the daughter of Ray Singh was likewise married to Prince Selim.

1589. Heg. 997. Died the learned Azd-ood-Dowla Shirazi, who had lately come from Guzerat.

1589. Heg. 998. Mirza Azeez Koka was appointed governor of Guzerat

1596. Heg. 1004. The Prince Morad Mirza and Mirza Chan laid siege to Ahmednugger, but finally entered into negotiations with the besieged, by which it was stipulated that they should still retain possession, but that Akbar should have the province of Berar.

1602. Heg. 1011. The celebrated Abul Fazel was attacked by banditti on his way from the Deccan to the capital, and murdered.

1605. Heg. 1014. Akbar died after a prosperous and glorious reign of fifty-one years and some months. He was certainly the greatest of the Mogul monarchs.

The Defence of Chittore.

The Defence of Chittore.

CHAPTER I.

The Governor of Chittore was upon the ramparts observing the progress of the enemy, who were making their approaches behind wicker frames filled with earth and covered with leather. The town was plentifully supplied with provisions; the garrison consisted of eight thousand Rajpoots, and it was determined to resist whilst a stone remained in the battlements. The siege had already continued six weeks, directed by Akbar in person; but no material effect had been produced. The besieged fought with that determined spirit peculiar to the Rajpoot character. The fortifications were of great strength, and although the garrison had made several desperate sallies, their loss had hitherto been insignificant.

Akbar was vexed at being detained so long before

the place, as he was in the habit of carrying much more promptly the towns which he invested with his armies. He, however, knew the strength of the garrison, was well acquainted with the characters of the men who composed it, and had therefore made up his mind that Chittore would not be an easy conquest.

While the governor was standing on the ramparts, he was joined by his wife, a handsome woman, under thirty, although the mother of two marriageable daughters.

"Jugmul," she said, whilst a glance of fire shot from her dilated eye, "will these scoffers of our gods prevail?"

"I know not—their king is brave."

"Is there a living soul within these walls of whom you cannot say as much?"

"I trust not; but he is likewise a successful general, and success is not the issue of chance but of talent."

"Have we not encountered both before now?"

"Yes; but the latter has its degrees, and the interval between great and little is extreme."

"Then you despair of driving these Moslems from before our walls."

"You know that a Rajpoot never despairs. Nevertheless, of this I am certain, that nothing but a

desperate resistance and an extensive destruction of the enemy will cause him to relinquish his present purpose."

"Jugmul, he knows not that there are women within this fortress who fear not to encounter his men in a struggle of death. Let him beware how he provokes such a collision."

"You miscalculate the energies of the wives and daughters of Chittore, if you measure them by your own."

"Should the extremity arrive, it will be seen whether I have misjudged my countrywomen. Meanwhile, Jugmul, I claim to be a partner in your toils, and to share the glory as well as the labour of your resistance to this Moslem sovereign. It is but just that the wife should partake of her husband's honours, of which I trust you are about to reap a full harvest."

At this time, Chittore was invested by an army of thirty thousand men, commanded by Akbar in person, acknowledged the greatest leader of his age; yet this did not dispirit the governor's wife, who was evidently more sanguine than her husband in the valour and resources of the garrison. Her eldest daughter, a lovely girl of sixteen, was engaged to a young Rajpoot chief, who when the siege commenced

had thrown himself into Chittore with a few resolute followers.

Pairup Singh had not only the qualities of daring valour and indomitable resolution in common with his race, but was moreover young, handsome, and intelligent. He was ardently attached to the beautiful Kherla Nuny, though she had not yet experienced the glow of fervent affection. The young Rajpoot had been the choice of her parents, not of herself; her feelings, therefore, towards him, when brought to a sum, would have formed a total amounting to little more than indifference. She felt no objection to the choice of her parents, for she had no reason on the score of his general qualities; but she did not love him.

Pairup Singh was anxious that their nuptials should immediately take place, notwithstanding the siege, which had already been going on several weeks; and from the strength of the garrison, and the resolution of the foe, there was every reason to apprehend that it would not be terminated for some months to come. He, therefore, sought the Rajpootni to propose an immediate fulfilment of his wishes.

"Kherla," said he, "youth is the beautiful season of life; but in proportion as it is beautiful it is fleeting. The hours of enjoyment are speedily [illegible]

out to us, it were therefore unwise to cast any away. I rejoice in the possession of your love, but would be made happy in the possession of you.

"Peirup Singh," replied the noble girl, "you have been promised that possession, and shall have it when the season comes; but I could not wed amid the dangers which surround us When your valour has contributed to drive the enemy from our walls, I will give myself up to your future good guidance."

"But why delay my happiness? Think you I shall fight less effectually as your husband than as your lover?"

"I know not; but I would be the spouse of a brave man. You have the reputation of being such, yet I have had no proof of it. Ample opportunity is now afforded you of showing that your reputation does not fall below your merit."

"Ha! must I prove my claim to your love, Kherla? This is rather a mortifying exaction."

"Not to a brave man, who is always proud to ratify by deeds of arms the reputation to which he lays claim."

"But I promise you, the moment you are mine I will give you those proofs you require that your husband is unable to dishonour the name of Rajpoot."

"Nay, Peirup Singh, the siege is still going on. I cannot comply with your wishes until the Moslem tyrant is either slain or driven from the neighbourhood of our homes. If you were to steep your sabre in his heart's blood, my consent to an immediate union would be won. It may be worth your thinking of, Peirup Singh."—

In Akbar's army was a Rajpoot, who having quitted Chittore in disgust, had enrolled himself among the Mogul troops. The cause of his abandoning his countrymen was this:—Having become attached to the younger daughter of the governor, who encouraged his addresses, her parents had refused their consent, not considering him eligible in point of rank for such an alliance. The girl, in consequence, implicitly obeying the directions of her parents, rejected him. His mortification was extreme.

All the passions of these fierce warriors are proportionably strong, and his disappointed feelings immediately urged him to an act of treachery.* He went over to the enemy, and made those communications which greatly facilitated the progress of the siege. Akbar well knew how to profit by the information received, but did not trust the man beyond the line of wary policy. The Rajpoot was allowed

see nothing by which he could betray the Emperor's designs to his countrymen, yet he was apparently treated with confidence and kindness. He, however, soon perceived that he was suspected. This discovery roused his indignation, and he immediately embraced the hollow maxim, suggested by his passions, that the man suspected of being a traitor is justified in becoming one. He was a fierce hot-blooded desperado, who sacrificed everything to the gratification of his feelings. Thinking that he might by a second act of treachery win the consent of Jugmul to wed his daughter, and thus gratify at once his love and his revenge, he determined to seek the governor of Chittore, and propose, as the price of his consent, to slay the Mogul monarch.

The first difficulty was to obtain admission into the fort. Aware that on one side, where the wall was so high as almost to preclude the possibility of scaling it, the sentries posted were fewer and less vigilant, he resolved alone to attempt to climb the wall in this spot. One dark night, having provided himself with several spikes about nine inches long, he proceeded cautiously to the rampart. He had quitted the camp unknown to any one, having passed the sentries by daylight without suspicion, upon some natural pretence. When he

reached the base of the ramparts, which was here at least eighty feet high, he began to try his spikes upon the masonry. The stones were laid one on the other without cement, so that the interstices between them were sufficiently spacious to admit, with a little management, the introduction of his spikes. Fixing the first about a yard from the ground he stood on it, and placing another a foot above it he again raised himself, and pursuing this plan with cool perseverance, in spite of the great peril, he at length reached the summit of the battlement.

Whilst he was thus ascending, with the patient earnestness of a man who has a personal feeling to gratify, the sentinel above was fortunately whiling away the hours by chaunting one of his native songs, which prevented him from hearing any sound made during this perilous ascent.

Previously to attempting the wall the Rajpoot had cast off his dress, so that, the night being dark, the deep hue of his skin was not likely to be perceived by any eye that might look over the parapet. The white tunic of the soldier upon the ramparts, on the contrary, rendered him visible to a consider-able distance through the darkness. When the Rajpoot reached the summit, he sprang over the parapet as the sentinel was leisurely walking

from him. Having fairly gained the ramparts he went deliberately up to the soldier, and, addressing him as if he were one of the garrison, had no difficulty in accounting for his appearance without exciting suspicion. Seeing that he was one of his own caste, the unsuspecting Hindoo entertained no doubt of his belonging to the troops under the command of Jugmul, and consequently allowed him to proceed without further interruption. The Rajpoot threw himself under the portico of a temple, and slept soundly until morning. At an early hour he appeared before the governor.

"You are, no doubt, surprised," said he, "to behold me again within these walls. You have considered me a traitor, but I shall be able to prove to you that you have been deceived, and to show that I may be the means of saving this town from the cruelty of a vindictive foe."

"The man who, under the emotions of anger, seeks an enemy's camp," said Jugmul, "is to be suspected."

"But you cannot be ignorant that, by seeking the enemy's camp, I may have obtained that information which will enable you to foil his approaches, and save the lives and properties of those under your government."

"Show me that you have done so before you expect that I should believe you are not a traitor."

"I have now sought you to make a proposal for the benefit of all within this fortress."

"Declare it."

"Upon certain conditions I undertake to kill the Moslem Sovereign."

"What are they?"

"That you will give me your daughter in marriage."

"Had I twenty daughters I should not think it too great a reward for so signal a service. Destroy the tyrant who has led his troops before our walls, and I pledge myself to give you my daughter with an ample dowry."

"I promise, at least, to attempt his death, and nothing but my own will secure his safety."

"I need not tell you that you are believed to have deserted to the enemy from an impulse of revenge towards me. When once an impression of this kind is excited in the breasts of brave and honourable men, it is no easy thing to remove it. If you can accomplish what you purpose, you will be immediately restored to the good opinion which, so far as now appears, you have justly forfeited."

The Rajpoot was sufficiently satisfied with his reception, but, when he desired to see the object of his attachment, her father replied,—

"No. You are still under the imputation of treachery; that imputation must be removed before you can have any intercourse with my daughter."

"Do you suspect my integrity?"

"I have no warranty for your honesty, and therefore till you show that your absence from the city was not dishonourable to you, I can look upon you in no other light than that of a traitor."

"Treat me as a traitor then, and order me to be flung from yonder battlements."

"No! you have undertaken to prove your zeal for the welfare of your country, and I should be loath to deprive you of the opportunity."

"Will you believe me faithful if I make a vacancy in the Mogul sovereignty before the waning of another moon?"

"The destruction of the Moslem king will restore you to my confidence, and to that of your countrymen."

The Rajpoot returned to Akbar's camp. His absence had been noticed. He was summoned before the Monarch. When he entered the presence, Akbar eyed him with keen and significant scrutiny, but the man did not blanch.

"Soldier," said the Emperor, "you were absent last night from the camp. What was the object of your absence?"

"The king's interest."

"The king's interest is not to be promoted by a breach of discipline."

"I obtained admission into the fort, and have done the base work of a spy for the benefit of my country's enemy."

The Emperor was silent for a moment, with his eye fixed with an intense expression of inquiry upon the traitor. "What did you learn?" he at length inquired.

"That a sally will be made by some of the choicest troops of the garrison, on the second morrow from the present. The governor is determined to suffer extermination rather than capitulate, and has employed a secret assassin to take the Sovereign's life."

"Know you where he lurks?"

"In the Moslem camp."

Akbar was not to be deceived by this flimsy artifice. He had too acute a perception of human motives to be persuaded that a man would thus gratuitously hazard his life for the interests of one to whom he was nationally an enemy, but he disguised his suspicions, and ordered the soldier to take his bow, [illegible]

use of which he was reported to be singularly expert, and accompany him before the enemy's walls. The Emperor was attended by only a few followers; a syce * led a horse behind his royal master.

When they were within bow-shot of the ramparts, seeing a group of the foe so near, the besieged crowded to the battlements, expecting that it was the preliminary of an assault. The governor was visible above the rest by his elevated stature.

"Now," said Akbar to the Rajpoot, "prove to me the truth of what you have lately represented by sending an arrow into the brain of yonder chief."

The Rajpoot affected to comply, and advanced gradually towards the syce, who was leading the Emperor's charger, and now stood nearly on a line with the royal group, a few yards to the left. The Rajpoot having placed himself beside this man, fixed an arrow in the string of his bow, and directed it towards the rampart. While the eyes of Akbar and his attendants were gazing upon the object towards which they expected every moment to see the arrow winged, the soldier, suddenly turning, discharged his shaft direct at the Sovereign. It pierced his shoulder and fixed in the bone. The Hindoo instantly flung

* An Indian groom.

down his bow, drew his dagger, and stabbing to the heart the attendant who was holding his royal master's horse, vaulted upon its back, plunged his heels in its sides, and darted towards the city with the velocity of a thunderbolt.

The nobles stood amazed. Akbar's eye glanced fire, but he was silent, and walked back to the camp, where the arrow was with some difficulty extracted. He was unable to quit his tent for some days; but within a fortnight the wound was healed.

Meanwhile, the Rajpoot, after he had discharged the arrow, rode to the city gate, and was immediately admitted. What he had done was reported to the governor, who immediately granted him an interview.

"I come now to claim my bride—my arrow has pierced the Moslem king."

"Is he slain?"

"It is impossible he should survive."

"It will be time to fulfil the conditions of a promise when it is proved that the contract has been completed according to the terms stipulated."

It was soon known in the besieged city that Akbar was recovering from his wound.

The Rajpoot was again summoned before the governor.

"You have failed," said Jugmul, "to perform your undertaking." The man's brow contracted. "My pledge is, therefore, cancelled, and I now determine that you shall pay the penalty of a double treachery. Though a traitor to your country, had you been the successful instrument of its vengeance, however base the motives, your life should have been spared, and my child have become a sacrifice: as it is you are not worthy of confidence, and therefore deserve to die."

He was immediately conducted to the Mahomedan camp, under a guard, with a letter from the governor to the Emperor, stating, that he gave up the traitor to be dealt with as the Mahomedan sovereign should deem proper. Akbar sent back the guard with a courteous message, and ordering one of the state elephants to be brought before him, commanded the traitor to stand forth. The man advanced with an undaunted countenance, expressing an utter contempt of death He crossed his arms over his breast, and directed towards the Monarch a look of defiance. At a signal from the royal hand, the elephant was urged forward by the mahout, and, upon reaching the criminal, it felled him to the earth with its trunk, placed its huge foot upon his body, and instantly trod him to death.

CHAPTER II.

The siege now proceeded with vigour. The Emperor gave orders that approaches should be made by a sabut, a description of defence for the besiegers peculiar to India. They were conducted in the following manner:—the zigzags, commenced at gun-shot distance from the fort, consisted of a double wall, and by means of blinds or stuffed gabions, covered with leather, the besiegers continued their approaches till they arrive near the walls of the place to be attacked. The miners then proceeded to sink their shafts, and carry on their galleries under ground, for the construction of the mines; in which, having placed the powder and blown up the works, the storming party rushed from the sabut, or superficial galleries, to assault the place*. On the present occasion, two sabuts or superficial galleries having been constructed, two mines were carried, under bastions, at different spots.

Akbar being determined to obtain possession of

* See Brigg's translation of Ferishta, vol. II., page 230.

the place, at whatever cost, daily inspected the working of the mines, which were prepared with great expedition. Several sallies were made by the besieged, which, though well directed and vigorously maintained, were invariably repulsed by the steady discipline of the Mogul troops.

Encouraged by the presence of their sovereign, the miners worked with incredible diligence, and the soldiers displayed a valour against the frequent sorties of the besieged, which completely repelled the headlong valour of the Rajpoots. Akbar marked with his especial notice, not only every officer, but likewise every common soldier, who distinguished himself; and thus, besides securing the affection of his army, excited deeds of individual heroism and of united valour, as gratifying to him as they were astonishing to the foe.

Meanwhile, within the fort, considerable confusion prevailed at the progress which the Mahomedans were making in their approaches, and at the unsuccessful issue of the sallies of the besieged. The governor's wife was daily on the ramparts encouraging the men. An attempt by the foe to scale the walls had been repelled with determined resolution by the garrison, during which the heroic matron had, with her own hands, hurled several Moslems from the

battlements as they reached the summit. Anxious to reap that glory considered the exclusive inheritance of the other sex, she determined upon an act as desperate as it was uncommon.

"Jugmul," said she, "I will visit the enemy's camp, and try if a woman's arm cannot reach his heart.'

"Go," said her husband, "if you think that you have a reasonable chance of ridding us of the foe. But what is your plan?"

"Merely to be conducted to the Mahomedan's tent; then trust to this arm and a woman's resolution for the issue."

The resolute Rajpootni arrayed herself in her most becoming attire, and about dusk sought the hostile camp. She was still a handsome woman. Being stopped by the guard, she represented herself to be a minstrel, desirous of exhibiting the superiority of her art before the Mogul Emperor She was alone, and there did not appear much risk in admitting a woman unaccompanied within the Mahomedan lines. It was announced to Akbar that a Hindoo musician was anxious to play before him. The Monarch who, after the harassing fatigues of the day, was fond of seeking relaxation from the anxieties which his present undertaking naturally accumulated

upon him, commanded her to be admitted. As she entered the royal presence, Akbar was extremely struck with her natural dignity of deportment, and the commanding expression of her countenance. He instantly saw that she was not a common minstrel, and, at once suspecting treachery, gave orders that no one, on whatever pretence, either man or woman, should be admitted into the camp.

"Well, gentle dame," said the Sovereign, "what are your wishes?"

"I have heard that the Mogul Monarch is a munificent benefactor to those who have the good fortune to succeed in administering to his pleasures. I would attempt to do as much, being held to have great skill upon my native vina."

"A graceful instrument," said the Emperor. "Approach, and try your skill, which, if it be at all equal to your beauty, cannot fail to delight."

She approached him*; and Akbar having placed her on his right hand, bade her play; at the same time watching her with so keen a survey, that the Rajpootni began to fear she was detected. With an unruffled brow, however, she commenced tuning her vina, which is the Hindoo lute, and played an air with considerable skill. The sovereign was gratified. She played several airs with great taste and feeling.

The enthusiasm of the performer was at length communicated to the Emperor; and, in the excess of his gratification, he was thrown off his guard Seizing a favourable moment, when his eyes were withdrawn from her, she drew a very small taper dagger; but before she could plunge it into the body of her intended victim, he had seized her wrist, and forced the instrument from her grasp.

"A very happy close to thy minstrelsy," said Akbar, with a severe smile.

"I have failed," said the heroic woman, undauntedly, "and am prepared for the issue. Give your orders, king, I am prepared to die. I did not make this attempt without weighing the penalty. I care not for the mode: you will see that I can defy your tortures; and, to give you some idea of the spirit of that foe which you seek to overcome, take the solemn assurance of a doomed woman, that there is not a living soul behind yonder battlements that would not brave death in any shape to be avenged upon the despisers of their gods."

Akbar made no reply, but, ordering her to be placed under a strong guard in a vacant tent, on the following morning sent her with an escort to the gate of Chittore; telling her, as she quitted his camp, that the Emperor of the Moguls warred not with women.

The haughty Rajpootni was deeply moved at her failure, and the Mogul's magnanimity. It, however, did not alter her determination to accomplish his death, though at the expense of her own life. She felt no longer surprised that his troops were invincible, and himself so renowned; and her hopes of forcing him to raise the siege began, from this moment, to decline. She discovered in Akbar the virtues of bravery, and a contempt of death, to a degree that would have done honour to a Rajpoot; and besides those virtues which he possessed common to all brave men, she could not but perceive that he was endowed with some peculiarly his own. She expressed her fears to Jugmul, that under such a leader the enemy must eventually prevail.—"But we can die," she said, with energy, "fighting on our ramparts; and their success, whenever it comes, will be recorded in characters of blood."

"Wife!" said the governor, "we have no reason to despair yet. The garrison is still strong and resolute; we have provisions for at least five months' consumption, and long before that period it must be decided whether the Moslems or Hindoos are to be masters of Chittore."

"He, Jugmul, who could spare the life of one who attempted his, and give her safe conduct to her friends,

is no ordinary man. We have more to dread from Akbar's magnanimity, than either from the number or bravery of his followers, though he is acknowledged to command the best disciplined armies in the East. What immortal glory would radiate from my brow if this arm had not failed to rid the world of so distinguished a foe."

"You are eloquent in his praises."

"Because he deserves all the good I can say of him, and all the hatred I can feel towards him.—Jugmul, I could barter my own life, and that of all those of whose lives mine has been the source, to send that man to the Assuras."

The next morning, the governor and his wife were on the ramparts inspecting the defences; for, from the enemy's movements, they hourly expected an assault, against which every provision was made which prudent foresight could suggest. Whilst Jugmul was surveying the progress of new works that he had ordered to be raised behind some low bastions where he considered the fortifications weak, a sudden explosion was heard from before the walls, which dismayed the besiegers. The shock was so great, that all standing upon the ramparts were thrown upon their faces. A considerable part of the lowest wall had fallen, and opened a practicable breach.

A second explosion followed, still more terrible, and added to the ruin,—opening another breach not less formidable. It was soon evident that the enemy had sprung two mines, and the besieged expected that the destruction of their ramparts was about to be followed by a general assault. They crowded the breach, to defend their city with a wall of human bodies. The enemy, however, did not storm the town, as was expected. The cause of this, although for a moment matter of anxious conjecture, was soon ascertained. Two thousand of Akbar's choicest troops, prepared to storm, had advanced when the first mine exploded, under the supposition that both mines had been sprung at the same moment. The party immediately divided into two equal bodies, in order to enter both breaches at once. One of the mines only had ignited, and, when the party reached the other, they were scattered as with the shock of an earthquake. The ground opened beneath their feet; numbers were blown into the air; others had their limbs torn from the quivering trunks, and a scene of consternation prevailed, altogether indescribable. Fifteen Mogul officers and above four hundred men were killed.

This unforeseen disaster damped the energies of the storming parties. They paused until the confusion

subsided, thus giving their enemies time to prepare for defence. They then advanced boldly—but not with elated hearts—to the breaches. They were received with unshrinking valour by the besieged. Every attempt to make good an entrance was withstood by men determined to die in defence of their walls. The Mahomedans were repulsed. They returned to the camp greatly dispirited, not covered with shame indeed, but without the glory of success. Akbar, conscious that the cause of failure was to be sought in the accident which had occurred previously to the assault being made, visited the men in person, encouraging them under their disheartening defeat, raised their sinking spirits, and animated them for fresh encounters.

The spirits of the besieged were so elated by their success, and the destruction of the enemy, that they began with extraordinary energy to repair the breaches, which by the next morning they had filled up with a thick wall of mud. This was a secure defence, for the moisture of the material rendered the surface so slippery, that the difficulty of scaling such an impediment was so great as to render the attempt impracticable. This did not dismay the besiegers, who prepared to renew their attempts upon the town with increased activity. Akbar's was not a mind to be

overcome by difficulties; it became more elevated in proportion as impediments multiplied. He gave his orders with that calm earnestness of resolution which shewed he would be satisfied with nothing short of complete success. His men evinced the greatest alacrity in their obedience to the orders of their officers, and soon recovered from the effects of their late mischance. The Hindoos were no less assiduous in providing against all possible contingencies: and, in the course of a few days, the works of Chittore were nearly as secure as before the opening of the breaches by the mines.

A few nights after the accident from the explosion of the mine, the Emperor, who had given orders that other works should be constructed, was in the batteries directing the workmen. While there, he observed the governor of Chittore superintending, by torch-light, the repairs of the walls, which were now nearly completed. Seizing a matchlock from one of the attendants, he directed it with so true an aim as to lodge a ball in Jugmul's forehead. It was easy to perceive that the greatest confusion prevailed upon the ramparts of the besieged city. Persons were seen hurrying to and fro, and the walls were soon crowded with troops and citizens. Akbar, from this moment, saw that the game was in his own hands. The death

of their governor he knew would render the garrison despairing and reckless; he consequently prepared for some of those dreadful eruptions so common among Rajpoot soldiers when driven to extremity.

Day had scarcely dawned, when his camp was attacked with a fury which nothing but the better discipline of his soldiers, and great numerical superiority, could have repelled. The Rajpoots, headed by their late governor's widow, fought with a desperation which, for the moment, bore down all opposition. The widow urged her horse with heedless fury towards Akbar's tent. An Omrah placing himself before her to oppose her further progress, she buried a short spear in his body, and, continuing her career, reached the royal pavilion. Here she was opposed by the guards, the foremost of whom struck her in the face with his sword; but having speared him, she flung herself from the back of her charger, and, rushing into the tent, sprang towards the couch,—it was empty. With some difficulty she was secured, but not until she had wounded several of the guard, and received a second severe wound in the neck, from which the blood flowed so copiously that she was obliged to relinquish the contest, becoming faint and unable to continue her exertions. By this time her

followers had been nearly all cut off, and few returned to the city to bear the lamentable tale of discomfiture.

Akbar entered his tent, and saw the noble woman who had made such a brave effort to avenge her husband's death fainting upon the ground, reeking with her own blood and that of her foes. He instantly ordered her wound to be dressed, and that she should be carefully attended during the night. He was charmed with her heroism, he reverenced her distress, and determined to offer very advantageous terms on the morrow, if the garrison would capitulate. The obstinacy of the besieged had won his admiration, and he was heard to say to a confidential officer, that with such troops he would undertake to conquer the world.

Next morning the captive widow rose from her couch, and demanded to see the Emperor. She was immediately brought before him.

"Sovereign of the Moguls," she said, undauntedly, "I have thrice sought your life. I have freely braved your vengeance. I am prepared for the infliction which I have provoked, and my failure deserves. What death am I to die?"

"Alla forbid! lady, that I should punish any one for trying to take away the life of a foe in honourable warfare. It is but natural that you should seek to accomplish the death of him who has destroyed

your husband, not from feelings of enmity, for I admired his bravery and esteemed his patriotism, but as a melancholy means to a glorious end. His death is one of those sad contingencies inseparable from a state of active hostility. I have now to propose to you terms for the capitulation of Chittore."

"If I have influence to decide upon a proposal that involves the dishonour of my countrymen, I will bid them resist till there shall no longer remain among them an arm to strike."

"But, lady, the terms I intend to offer will be alike honourable to you and the inhabitants of yonder fortress."

"No terms from the sovereign of the Moguls can be honourable to those whom he has so irreparably wronged. I will listen to no accommodation short of disbanding your army, and leaving the city of Chittore to enjoy that peace, which you have wantonly interrupted. I am now in your power. I seek not to stay your vengeance. Wreak it upon me, with the flush and glow of a tyrant's satisfaction. I will brave you with my last gasp of life. I will defy you with my expiring breath; but never could I listen to terms from the man who has profaned the sacred sanctuary of the Hindoos, and cast down upon the threshold of their temples, the representatives of their gods."

"Lady, I would show the difference between the magnanimity of the Mahomedan and the Hindoo. You have thrice sought my life with an asperity of passion, sanctioned only by what you consider the sacred obligations of revenge. You have refused to listen to terms of honourable accommodation. You have expressed towards me the deadliest animosity. You are in my power, and I could in a moment prevent all further exercise of your hatred, but I forbear. You are free. I have commanded an escort to be ready once more to bear you to the gates of your native city."

The Rajpootni turned her head—a tear for an instant glazed her eye, but the warm glow of pride dried it in its crystal formation, and it ceased to flow. She uttered not a word, but silently quitted the tent, making a haughty salaam to the Emperor as she passed, mounted a litter which had been prepared to convey her, and in a short time was once more within the gates of Chittore. Her heart now swelled with thoughts of desperation and of death. She acknowledged the magnanimous forbearance of her enemy, and accepted life only to perform a last and awful duty among her family and her countrymen. Her soul dilated with the solemn purpose which she was about to fulfil—the crisis had arrived.

CHAPTER III.

THE inhabitants of Chittore now gave themselves up to despair. Their governor was dead, a great number of the garrison had been slain in the late sally, and no hope of rescue appeared. The effect was dreadful. The fear of falling into the enemy's hands drove many to deeds of desperation, only heard of among those whose minds have been offuscated by the gloom of that superstition of which idolatry is the monstrous parent. Whole families destroyed themselves, dying in each other's arms, and with their expiring breaths cursing those who had induced them to embrace such a dreadful alternative. There was scarcely a house that was not filled with the dying and the dead. The groans of death within mingled with the clamours of war without, and the great conqueror of nature was about to reap a full harvest of triumph.

Day after day passed, and these scenes were repeated. Corpses lay in the streets and "there was none to bury them;" so that the steams of pestilence began to rise and load the air with the elements of

destruction. For two or three days the heroic widow of Jugmul, who now directed the defence of Chittore, was confined to her couch; but the moment she was able to rise she quitted her house and repaired to the ramparts. The despair of the citizens had reached her ears; she heard it in moody silence, but calmly gave her orders, and summoning her chief officers, among whom was Peirup Singh, she said—

"The enemy are invincible and we have nothing now but to prepare for our final change. I need not tell you how the Rajpoot comports himself at this hour of extremity."

"Nay, why this despair?" asked Peirup Singh. "We are not yet vanquished. The garrison is still numerous, our soldiers are brave, and our enemies enfeebled by the late conflict."

"They are mighty in their strength; we are only mighty in our weakness—they to vanquish, but we to perish. I need not bid you prepare, because I know none of our blood can be backward to meet death as becomes the brave."

Peirup Singh, though a courageous man, was by no means prepared for such an issue as the Rajpootni's widow seemed to contemplate. He loved her daughter; and, with the prospect of enjoyment

before him, did not precisely see the necessity of that desperate alternative to which the late governor's relict alluded. Even should they be obliged to capitulate, the magnanimity of Akbar was too well known to warrant the supposition that he would treat the vanquished with tyranny; the Rajpoot therefore thought that a capitulation in time, to so generous an enemy, would be their safest policy.

When he expressed these sentiments to her who directed the movements of the besieged, she said, with an indignant glance at the proposer of so degrading an act of pusillanimity,

"What! does the suitor of my daughter make a proposal so unworthy of his race? It is enough; henceforward you are a stranger to my home."

She turned from him and would not hear his reply. Having given her orders in case an assault should be made by the foe, she visited the houses of those whom despair had urged to fatal extremities. The sad sight only nerved her heart to fiercer resolution. She looked upon the dead without a sigh. She conversed with the dying as if they were about to be hushed in a joyous sleep, and there was neither regret nor anguish in their expiring groans. The dead bodies scattered about the streets, and exhaling the elements of death, moved her not

to an emotion. Her soul was passion-cased—it was absorbed by one intense feeling. Upon entering her home she was met by her elder daughter.

"Kherla," she said calmly, "death has been doing much unsightly work among us. The conquerors will not find their garland of victory a beautiful wreath. The foul steams of decaying mortality will hang upon and blight it. My child we must go to another change. Are you prepared to quit a base world for a brighter? Agni * must be our guide to the mutation which awaits us when these poor bodies shall have become ashes."

"My mother, I am ready to perform the conditions of my destiny. I desire not to exist longer than I can live in the freedom to which I was born; and rather than become the captive of the Moslem I am willing to encounter the flames which shall give me a release from those bonds the foe are preparing to cast upon us."

The mother embraced her child. The younger girl had overheard this conversation, and her heart palpitated. She had hitherto found life an acceptable and sweet possession. She, therefore, felt no desire to embrace the faggot, and have her spirit dis-

* The God of Fire.

appeared in person in the thickest of that awful struggle, and was twice wounded by a Rajpoot sabre; but his armour protected his life, and the half naked bodies of his foes exposed them to the invincible force of his sword.

For several hours the sanguinary strife continued, until almost every Rajpoot was slain. Upwards of two thousand Mahomedans were left dead upon the field, and full twice that number wounded. The brave Hindoos had raised a memorable trophy round their bodies never to be forgotten. Akbar visited the field of carnage. He was astonished at the impetuous and unflinching valour displayed by the foe. He dropped a tear as his eye glanced over the field covered with slain. He had obtained a dearly-bought victory. It was evident that had the enemy met him upon equal terms, with them would have remained the honours of triumph. The sacrifice had indeed been great, but the victory was complete. As soon as the wasted energies of his troops should be recruited he determined to make an assault upon the town if the terms which he was disposed to offer were rejected.

Among the few Rajpoots who had survived the carnage of that sanguinary day was Peirup Singh.

He sought the lovely Kherla Nuny, hoping that she would fly with him from peril to happiness, but it was evident he knew her not.

"Kherla," said he, "all is lost. We have done every thing that brave men could do, and Chittore is at the foe's mercy. Let us fly, my bride, while the means of escape remain to us. I can take you to a place of safety."

"Who are you?" calmly asked the noble girl.

"Is it possible you can ask such a question of Peirup Singh, your accepted bridegroom, who is prepared to convey you from this scene of carnage to a home where happiness awaits you?"

"Peirup Singh, the bridegroom of Kherla Nuny, would not dishonour his kindred. The daughter of Jugmul can never unite herself with one who, after having assumed the saffron robe, has run from the foe and hid his recreant head behind stone walls. Dost thou fear to die, Peirup Singh?"

"No; but I deem life a gift not to be rashly thrown away when it may be appreciated and enjoyed. If good can be purchased by the sacrifice it is our duty to yield it up, otherwise such a sacrifice becomes a foolish and culpable suicide."

"Is not the avoidance of disgrace a good? Is escape from death, with the brand of infamy upon a

man's brow, no evil? He who would hesitate between life and disgrace, has a petty soul; but he that would accept the one with the polluted inheritance of the other is the worst of recreants. We never can be united, Peirup Singh."

The rejected Rajpoot was deeply mortified—she would not listen to his expostulations; but quitting his presence, turned upon him a look of withering scorn. He was confounded. Between shame and passion he stood aghast. He remained for some time irresolute, when on a sudden the apartment was filled with a thick curling smoke. He rushed into a court towards a passage whence the stifling vapour proceeded. The awful truth at once burst upon his sight. The funeral fire had been kindled in a large subterranean chamber, in which all the members of the family, except the late governor's widow and her younger daughter, had assembled, to the number of a hundred and forty-seven. Peirup Singh looked into the opening, and beheld the beautiful Kherla waving a torch with which she had just ignited the combustibles strewed over the apartment. In a few moments the smoke shut out all from his sight, and the crackling flames prevented his ear from catching the groans of the dying. The forked fires rose to the skies with a horrid hissing, as if of demons triumphing in

the frightful consummation of death. Both the sight and the sound were horrible. There was no rescuing the infatuated girl from that destruction upon which she had voluntarily rushed. She had already become the virgin bride of death. Young and numerous were the bridesmaids of that fiery marriage. Peirup Singh quitted the scene of horror with a deeply smitten heart.

CHAPTER IV.

Akbar sent a Vakeel, offering to the besieged most liberal terms, which were indignantly rejected. "Tell your king," was the reply, "that we accept no terms from him who seeks to dispossess us of our homes. We deem that capitulation is a word only admitted into the vocabulary of cowards."

The Vakeel returned, and Akbar determined to storm the town. On that very day two mines were sprung, which made a breach in the walls in two several places as before. The heroine who now commanded Chittore was undismayed at what she saw. The whole garrison had been cut off except about two hundred men. Multitudes of citizens had destroyed themselves and their families to escape falling into the conqueror's hands. She however summoned as many of the inhabitants as were in a condition to make a final effort, determined to offer resistance to the enemy so long as there remained a man within the fortress able and willing to fight.

The moment the breaches were formed the heroic widow ordered new works to be raised, and thus a

slight defence was opposed to the foe in an incredibly short space of time. High wooden frames, filled with mud, had been previously prepared, and were instantly placed in the openings of the rampart. Upon the battlements stood a small but determined band, with large vessels containing a boiling liquid of the consistence of pitch, ready to pour it upon the besieger's heads, as they attempted to scale the shattered walls. A number of females armed with missiles likewise crowded the ramparts, determined to take their part in the close of this desperate game. All the principal women within the fortress had already suffered themselves to be sacrificed by their husbands, sons, or brothers; those that remained were only a few who had escaped the general massacre, to die in the breaches of their native city.

While the inhabitants were working at the breaches, Peirup Singh came before the mother of his beloved. She moved from him with a glance of scorn.

"Nay," said he, "turn not from a despairing man—I come here to redeem that honour which you consider I have forfeited. The master-passion within me is now quelled, and I yield to the sadder circumstances of my destiny."

"The man," said the Rajpootni, "who prefers life to glory, deserves not to die the warrior's death.

There are enough on these battlements to leave a record for the dark page of history of the desperate defence of Chittore. You may go and propitiate the conqueror, and live with the galling iron of bondage entering into your recreant soul. We seek no aid from Peirup Singh."

The Rajpoot bit his lip, but stirred not. The hurried glance of his eye, which darted like a sunbeam towards the advancing hosts, expressed the fierce resolve which swelled his heart at this moment of advancing peril. It was the glance of a bayed tiger. He drew his sword and walked with a deliberate but firm step to the least protected part of the breach.

The enemy advanced at a quick trot, and poured forward like a sudden irruption of the sea. When the foremost reached the trench the shock was terrific. They were forced back by the besieged, with a resolution which nothing could withstand. The scalding preparation was poured upon their heads. This new mode of resistance confounded them. They drew back from the rampart, and renewed their attack only to meet with a similar reception. Time after time they were repulsed, but the besiegers being greatly exposed in the breaches, suffered extremely from the enemy's matchlocks.

Peirup Singh fought with the fury of a gored lion. He was twice severely wounded, but did not retire from the station he had chosen. Evening put an end to the struggle, and the Mahomedans were obliged to retreat.

Their temporary success elated the besieged, still it was evident that they could not maintain a successful opposition for another day. Their numbers had been much diminished by the enemy's well-directed fire, and the temporary defences were considerably weakened by continual assaults. Nevertheless, it was determined that resistance should be offered so long as there was a man to stand in the trench.

Next morning the attack was renewed. Many of the Mahomedans were hurled headlong from the walls in attempting to scale them, but were succeeded by fresh troops equally resolute; and at length, in spite of the exertions of the despairing Hindoos, they obtained a footing, and the trench was carried. Peirup Singh having killed several of the foe was shot through the brain with a matchlock, and fell dead into the ditch. The heroic Rajpootni widow, who, though dangerously wounded, still stood upon the battlements encouraging the brave defenders of Chittore, rusl for-

ward to meet death in the trench, but the enemy generously dropped their swords as she advanced, and attempted to take her alive. Perceiving the intention, she instantly retreated towards the town, followed by a party of Akbar's soldiers. Though still reeking with her blood she gained her home before them, and, having entered, securely fastened the door. Summoning her only remaining daughter, she cried—

"My child, the moment is come, when we must consummate our triumph. We shall not fall alive into the hands of the foe."

She seized a torch which had been kept ready lighted, to meet such a melancholy contingency. The daughter had not the mother's heroism—she shrieked as she advanced towards the pile, and would have retreated, but her resolute parent, with the last collected effort of strength, „dragged her onward. "There is no alternative but death, my child," she said, calmly. She reached the pyre, took the trembling girl in her arms, ascended the fatal platform, applied the torch, and in a few moments both mother and daughter were wrapped in the embrace of death. The soldiers entered, having burst open the door, and found their prey had escaped them. They gazed upon the flaming pile, upon which oil had been

poured to excite it to quicker combustion. They were deprived of their victim. The flames were singing a fearful requiem over her ashes. It was a horrible sight to witness the combined consummation of superstition and despair.

The fortress was soon filled with the victorious Mahomedans. Those Hindoos who had not adopted the desperate recourse of self immolation, and had survived the carnage, thronged to the temples, the entrances of which they barricaded, determined to die in their sanctuaries, rather than yield to the upholders of a different faith. Akbar himself entered the town, and ordered the temples to be forced. They who had sought sanctuary thither, perished without a murmur. They attempted no resistance, but suffered themselves to be slaughtered like animals for the sacrifice. Several thousands thus became martyrs to their prejudices, and died with a smile of defiance upon their lips, without raising a hand in self-defence. The Emperor, however, did not evince that bigoted zeal which has so much disgraced the religion of every country in which it has been actively displayed, but spared the venerable monuments of an ancient, though besotted, superstition. His taste admired the structure, whilst his soul contemned the profane rites which they had

been reared to consecrate, and though he destroyed the monstrous idols of the heathens, he allowed their temples to stand; many of them noble monuments of Hindoo talent and architectural skill.

When the fortress was fully in possession of Akbar, he gazed with astonishment upon the prodigal sacrifice of human life, which had occurred in almost every house. The Johur had taken place, and many thousand females of all ages signalised the detestation of their foes, by submitting to a voluntary death. Multitudes of either sex surrendered their lives, some by the sword, others on the flaming pile. Blood flowed in torrents. The steams of death rose to the fair heavens, which looked down calmly and beautifully, but through which glanced an omnipotent eye upon the violence, the follies, and the delinquencies of men.

So great had been the destruction, that little treasure was found by the conquerors within the fortress. They who perished by a voluntary decease had taken care, previously, to consume or destroy everything of value which they possessed. Even the treasures of the temples had been disposed of, so that the conquerors entered a depopulated town, rendered a scene of utter desolation,—a fit abode only for the reptile and beast of prey.

That portion of the garrison which had last sallied from the gates to die fighting for their country and its shrines, perished in a cause which they imagined would end in their transportation to higher scenes of enjoyment in new states of being. They first purified themselves with water, offered adoration to the Divinity, made benefactions to the poor, placed a branch of the toolsi in their casques, and the saligram round their necks, emblems of death and the grave; and having cased themselves in armour, and put on the saffron robe, they bound the mor, a funeral coronet, round their heads, embraced each other for the last time, and rushed forth to perish in the fierce conflict of arms.

As the king walked through the now desolate streets, he was deeply affected. Disfigured bodies, black and putrid, and exhaling the horrible odours of decay, lay before him in all their revolting deformity. The corpses of those who fell by their own hands had been just put under the surface of the ground, and were seen protruding through the earth from their superficial graves, filling the air with the seeds of pestilence. Women and children were still among the dead and dying, at the last extremity, imploring piteously for a cup of water to slake the raging

thirst that was consuming them, and adding intolerable torment to their expiring agonies.

All the corpses were ordered to be collected together and consumed upon one vast pile, and fires were kept burning for days to purify the air and cleanse the polluted town.

Such were the frightful circumstances under which the Mogul emperor became master of Chittore. It is, in truth, melancholy to contemplate the horrors which frequently follow on the heels of human ambition. It seems to look upon the sanguinary devastations of war as a sort of legalised licence to destruction, and they therefore fail to excite our sympathies; but if we consider what an awful amount of human beings have been cut off by the sword, or by those scourges so often the frightful handmaids of war, pestilence and famine, we should be startled at the prodigious total. Animals destroy each other singly, and in obedience to an irresistible instinct to support their own lives, which, to them, is the greatest boon of Heaven, because they have no prospects beyond; but the rational portion of God's creatures destroy each other by large masses, and in mighty sums, merely to substantiate the sordid calculations of interest, to appease their base passions, or to realise the aims of a bloated ambition.

Akbar having done all in his power to alleviate the miseries of the few surviving native inhabitants of Chittore, commanded the walls to be repaired, appointed Asuf Chan Hirvy governor of the fortress, leaving with him a numerous garrison, and returned with the rest of his army to his capital.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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